BROADBAND EXPANSION GRANT APPLICATION For Fiscal Year 2022

Primary Applicant (Name and Address): Tri-County Communications Cooperative, Inc. 417 5 th Ave N. PO Box 578 Strum, WI 54770	Applications MUST be UPLOA Commission's website, http://psc.wi.gov/apps35/ERF u.aspx. Refer to section 2.3 fo Applications are due and MUS later than: March 17, 2022 at Time. Late applications will r	r detailed instructions. The uploaded to ERF no 4:00pm (16:00) Central
	Contact for further information PSCStatebroadbandoffice@w	
	Date: December 1, 2021	
The Public Service Commission of Wisconsin is see Commission may award one or more grants during eligibility requirements set forth in Wis. Stat. § 19 authorized by the Wisconsin Building Commission applicants are subject to the requirements of Wiscolear and achievable plan to improve broadband of the State.	g Fiscal Year 2022 to public and private e 6.504. This grant round will be funded w pursuant to Wis. Stat. § 13.48(30). As s . Stat. § 13.48(30). Successful applicants	entities that meet the vith bond proceeds uch, successful will demonstrate a
Applicant Certification: In signing this application, Applicant and its employees and agents have not, participated in any collusion or otherwise taken as application; that no attempt has been made to independent or application; that this application has been independent or potential competitor; that this applications to any other applicant or competitor; this application are true and correct to the best of Applicant agrees to, accepts, and will comply with any award of a broadband expansion grant as may	either directly or indirectly, entered into ny action in restraint of free competition duce any other person or firm to submit ndently arrived at without collusion with ication has not been knowingly disclosed that all of the responses and representa the undersigned's knowledge, informat all of the terms and conditions respection	o any agreement or with respect to this or not to submit an any other proposer, d prior to the opening of ations of Applicant in ion, and belief; and that ng this application and
Name of Authorized Representative (Type or Print)	Title	Phone () (715) 695-2691

3-16-2022

CEO

Cheryl Rue

Signature of Authorized Representative

SUMMARY OF GRANT APPLICATION

Primary Applicant Name	Amount of Broadband Grant Request (round to nearest dollar)
Tri-County Communications Cooperative, Inc.	\$1,666,000
Federal Employer Identification No.	Amount of Matching Funds Pledged (round to nearest dollar)
39-1024048	\$714,000
Contact Name and Title	Total Cost of Proposed Project (round to nearest dollar)
Cheryl Rue, CEO	\$2,380,000
Telephone Number	Project Name
(715) 695-2691	Curran/Northfield FTTH
E-mail Address(es)	Type of Proposed Broadband Service (FTTH, Cable, DSL, etc.)
crue@tccpro.net	FTTH
Grant Manager, if different than Primary Applicant	Type of Proposed Project (Last-mile, Middle-Mile, backbone, other)
N/A	Last-mile
Grant Manager Contact Name	Grant Manager Email Address and Telephone Number
N/A	N/A
If the application proposes a public-private partnership, list the name Town of Curran Town of Northfield N9526 Hagen Dr. 10752 School House Rd. Hixton, WI 54635 Hixton, WI 54635	s, addresses, and FEINs of the partner companies or organizations
FEIN 39-1082436 FEIN 36-6006033	
Brief Project Description (2 sentences) Tri-County Communications Cooperative, Inc. will build a 47-mile FTT Town of Curran and the Town of Northfield in Jackson County. This w	H network that will serve 168 Underserved/Unserved addresses in the vill give both Towns 100% FTTH broadband.
Maximum Proposed Download Transmission Speed	Maximum Proposed Upload Transmission Speed
10 Gbps	10 Gbps
Minimum Proposed Download Speed to Customer Location 100 Mbps	Minimum Proposed Upload Transmission Speed to Customer Location 100 Mbps
County or Counties served by this project Jackson County	Community or Communities served by this project Town of Curran, Town of Northfield
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List of the broadband service providers, if any, currently serving the ar CenturyLInk/Lumen Bug Tussel Wireless	ea the applicant proposes to serve
Does proposed project serve an <u>unserved</u> area of the State, as defined in <u>Section 1.4</u> of the application instruction? (yes/no) Yes	Is the Applicant certified as a Broadband Forward! Community or Telecommuter Forward! Community, or does the grant project propose to serve a Broadband Forward! Community or Telecommuter Forward! Community? (yes/no) No
For last mile projects or component the expected number of Business Locations that will have access to the improved broadband service (i.e., total business locations passed or with new service access). 21 in Curran including farms & home-based business; 1 in Northfield	For last mile projects or components the expected number of Residential Locations that will have access to the improved broadband service (i.e., total residential locations passed or with new service access). 165
Of the improved business locations, how many locations are unserved? 4	Of the improved residential locations, how many are <i>unserved</i> ?
For providers that are eligible telecommunications carriers will the proposed broadband service be available to Lifeline customers? (yes/no) Yes	Are there any programs available for low-income households to access low-cost service or discounts? (yes/no) Yes
Is the internet service provider currently participating in the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program? (yes/no) No Tri-County does participate in the ACP program.	Is the internet service provider currently participating in the Department of Public Instruction and CESA purchasing's Digital Learning Bridge? (yes/no) No
Did the internet service provider participate in the Public Service Commission's voluntary Broadband Coverage Data Collection in 2012? (yes/no) Yes	

Summary of Project Budget and Funding Statement

FY22 Broadband Expansion Grant Application Budget & Income Summary



2,380,000.00

714,000.00

30.0% match requested

Please complete this form using Microsoft Excel. A PDF copy must be attached to your application as page four. In addition, this form must also be uploaded to ERF in Excel format.

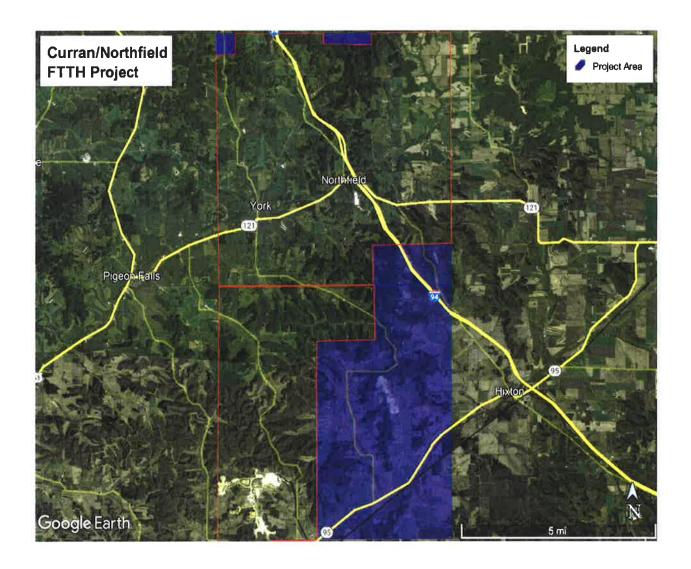
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Grant A	pplicant:	Pro	ject:				
Tri-County Communications Cooperative, Inc. Curran/Northfield FTTH							
		Budge	t i		1-8-5	4	
Line:	Description / Category:	G	Frant Funds:		Match:		Total:
1	Contractual, Consultant Fees	\$	1,548,400.00	\$	663,600.00	\$	2,212,000.00
2	Equipment	\$	49,000.00	\$	21,000.00	\$	70,000.00
3	Supplies	\$	3,500.00	\$	1,500.00	\$	5,000.00
4	Labor (Salary, Fringe)	\$	54,600.00	\$	23,400.00	\$	78,000.00
5	Permitting, Licensing Fees	\$	10,500.00	\$	4,500.00	\$	15,000.00
6	Travel					\$	-
7	Other	7				\$	
				-		-	

Total:

\$ 1,666,000.00 \$

-	Pledged	Contributions	The second second	
#:	Entity:	Entity Type:	Pledge Type:	Pledge:
1	Tri-County Communications Cooperative, Inc.	Applicant	Cash	\$ 375,200.00
2	Jackson County	Other	Cash	\$ 100,000.00
3	Healthcare	Other	Cash	\$ 21,000.0
4	Town of Curran	Partner	Cash	\$ 144,229.0
5	Town of Northfield	Partner	Cash	\$ 39,900.0
6	School Districts	Other	Cash	\$ 15,271.0
7	Business/Industry	Other	Cash	\$ 14,575.00
8	Residents	Other	Cash	\$ 3,825.00
9				
10				
			Total:	\$ 714,000.00

Project Map



Executive Summary

Tri-County Communications Cooperative, Inc. ("Tri-County") is applying for a Wisconsin Broadband Expansion Grant ("Grant") to extend its Fiber-To-The-Home ("FTTH") network through partnership agreements with the Towns of Curran and Northfield ("Towns") in Jackson County ("Project"). The Project will provide FTTH Broadband to 168 locations in an underserved/unserved area. The Towns of Curran and Northfield are located in the Northwest part of Jackson County. This Project proposes a FTTH Gigabit Passive Optical Network ("GPON"), with a minimum broadband speed of 100 Mbps symmetrical, to the locations in the Towns that have no broadband providers providing ubiquitous reliable broadband speeds of at least 25 Mbps down and 3 Mbps up. The Project will construct a 47-mile fiber network covering a 23 square mile area in the Towns. See page 5 for a detailed map of the Project Area. The estimated construction cost for the Project is \$2,380,000. The Grant request in this Application is \$1,666,000 or 70% of the new construction costs. The Towns, along with an additional 38 residential and business contributors, have committed to contribute \$238,800. Jackson County has committed to contribute \$100,000 to the cost of construction. The balance of the construction costs of \$375,200 will be paid for by Tri-County.

Tri-County currently provides FTTH to parts of both Towns. Tri-County has received many calls from residents in the underserved/unserved area looking for an affordable and reliable option for broadband service. The Project would serve those residents and provide a pathway to service many more homes in this area in the future. The Project area will be costly to construct and the underserved/unserved area may never be served with FTTH without a Wisconsin Broadband Access Grant. Tri-County is unaware of any plans to provide facility based broadband service to the Project area by any provider by December 31, 2024.

This application provides evidence of how the Project will promote economic development, serve K-12 students as well as college and adult continuing education, and facilitate adoption of telemedicine services. It was developed with input from residents and businesses via a survey sent to taxpayers. This resulted in an outpouring of community support, illustrated by the number of residents and businesses committing to contribute match dollars, and the **63 letters of support** included in the Attachment to this application.

Following are examples of who this Project will impact: Students who have been left behind due to lack of internet connectivity; 5 educators/teachers with their curriculum planning and classes dependent on internet; over 20 small businesses supported by home office; Registered Nurses taking continuing education courses from home and options to work from home with telehealth; Greenhouse family-business which will be able to better serve their customers through faster download and upload speeds with payment devices; veterans and elderly with health needs that can be met with telehealth; Fire & EMS personnel obtaining continuing education; farmers competing in the global market with technology supported by high-speed wi-fi; election poll-workers who rely on internet for state training; town government officials and employees communicating and further educating themselves to serve their constituents the best they can; and lastly -- future generations.

If Tri-County were successful in the award of a grant for the Curran/Northfield FTTH Project, construction would start in the spring of 2023. Completion of construction would be projected for summer of 2024.

- 3.2 Mandatory application requirements
 - 3.2.1 Applicant identification and contact information
 - a. The name and address of the entity applying for the grant, and the mailing address, telephone number and e-mail address of one or more contact persons representing the applicant.

Name of Entity: Tri-County Communications Cooperative, Inc.

Mailing Address: 417 5th Avenue North

PO Box 578

Strum, Wisconsin 54770

Main Telephone Number: 715-695-2691

Contacts: - Buck Webb, COO - bwebb@tccpro.net

- Cheryl Rue, CEO - crue@tccpro.net

b. If the application proposes a public-private partnership, the identity and contact information for all application partners.

This application propose a public/private partnership agreement with the Town of Curran and the Town of Northfield.

Mailing Address: Town of Curran

N9526 Hagen Drive Hixton, WI 54635

Michelle Schwenneker, Clerk townofcurran@gmail.com

Matt Karls, Chairman

mattkarls88@gmail.com

Mailing Address: Town of Northfield

10752 School House Rd.

Hixton, WI 54635

Richard Erickson, Chairman

715-695-984-2473

c. The application must show that the applicant is an organization, a telecommunications utility, or a city, village, town, or county that has established a legal partnership or joint venture arrangement with an otherwise qualified organization or telecommunications utility, and as such meets the eligibility requirements set forth in Wis. Stat. § 196.504(1).

Tri-County Communications Cooperative, Inc is an Incumbent Local Exchange Carrier ("ILEC") certified to provide telecommunications service in the State of Wisconsin pursuant to Section 196.50(2)(b) of the Wisconsin State Statute. Tri-County's PSCW Utility # is 5950 and currently serves the Wisconsin study area #330960.

3.2.2 Description of the project

a. A static map and description of the area of the State that will be affected by the proposed project.

The map must be accompanied by:

 A URL reference to a spatial file (Geodatabase / Feature Class, or Shapefile or KML) showing the proposed service area. A spatial file including census blocks that intersect the proposed project area is also acceptable.

The Map on page 5 of the application shows the proposed broadband Project area.

A KML file of the proposed project area has been emailed to pscbroadbanddata@wisconsin.gov

b. If the project area lies within a census block designated as served on the PSC Broadband Map, provide additional documentation to demonstrate the actual broadband service that is available in the proposed project area.

The Project area is underserved/unserved per the PSC Broadband Map.

An explanation of how the proposed project will increase broadband access. Include information about the:

Potential and expected number of households served, including number of unserved and underserved locations.

Potential households in the unserved area are 11. Expected households to be served are 9. Potential households in the underserved area are 157. Expected households to be served are 126.

Potential and expected number of businesses served, including number of unserved and underserved locations.

Potential businesses in the unserved area are 3. Expected to businesses to be served are 3. Potential businesses in the underserved area are 9. Expected businesses to be served are 9.

Expected number of seasonal residents and tourists served.

12 seasonal residents would be served by this project.

Estimated download and upload speed of the broadband service packages available for purchase.

Tri-County will provide broadband down/up speeds at a minimum of 100 Mbps/100 Mbps with 10 Gbps available to all locations.

c. A statement whether the proposed project is targeting the "last mile," "middle mile," or backbone portion of the broadband infrastructure.

The proposed project is targeted as a "last mile", dedicated broadband infrastructure. Tri-County is currently providing wireline broadband service and has access to adequate middle mile and backbone Internet access.

d. A description of the broadband service to be provided, including estimated download and upload speeds, whether the speed is based on dedicated or shared bandwidth, and the technology that will be used. This description may be illustrated by a map or schematic diagram, as appropriate.

Tri-County is currently providing dedicated wireline broadband services using a 100% fiber network. Tri-County will provide broadband service using a Fiber-To-The-Home network with Gigabit Passive Optical Network ("GPON") technology. This fiber network will be similar to the fiber network currently in place and used in the current Tri-County service territory. The latest technology will be used to provide the highest quality of service. This Project fiber network will be connected to the existing fiber network and broadband electronics used to provide broadband services in the Tri-County service territory. Available broadband speeds and costs will be as follows.

100 Mbps x 100 Mbps \$49.95 250 Mbps x 250 Mbps \$69.95 500 Mbps x 500 Mbps \$99.95 1 Gbps 1 Gbps \$199.95

- e. Middle Mile project information not applicable
- f. A schedule by which the applicant intends to complete the components of the proposed project. The project period is up to 24 months.

If the grant application for the Project is approved in 2022, Tri-County is proposing the following schedule:

August – September, 2022 Order equipment/Staking May – July, 2023 Bury main line cable

May – October, 2023 Install electronics at customer locations

August – December, 2023 Turn up Service

February 2024 Request final payment of Grant Funds

- 3.2.3 Itemized Budget (all amounts should be rounded to the nearest dollar)
 - a. In addition to the Summary of Project Budget that is included as page 3, applicants should include a price list or quote for any equipment the applicant intends to purchase, including capital expenditures. The application should also indicate whether any facilities involved would be owned, rented, or leased.

Project Construction Costs:

The Curran/Northfield FTTH Project summary of the construction cost for the fiber network. All fiber construction will be provided by a third-party contractor. All of the network will be owned by Tri-County.

<u>Description</u> Buried Fiber Network		Total Cost
Mainline fiber material and construction	\$ 1,655,182	
Drops material and construction	<u>\$ 556,818</u>	\$ 2,212,000
Floatuanies and Equipment		
Electronics and Equipment	4	
Splitter Cabinet	\$ 9000	
FTTH Electronics	\$ 8600	
Spltters	\$ 2000	
GPON SFP's/CPE Electronics	<u>\$ 50,400</u>	\$ 70,000
Labor/Engineering/ONT installation	\$78,000	\$ 78,000
Supplies	\$ 5000	\$ 5000
Highway and Railroad Permitting	\$ 15,000	\$ 15,000
Total		\$2,380,000

b. The application must show that the grant, if awarded, will not subsidize the expenses of a telecommunications provider or the monthly bills of telecommunications customers. For purposes of this grant program, subsidize means a contribution to the operating costs, including profit, of the telecommunications provider.

The grant funds requested will not subsidize the expense to provide telecommunications services to end user customers. The grant funds requested in this Application will only be used to help pay for a portion of the fiber network and electronics used to provide broadband. No grant funds will be used for monthly recurring operating costs for broadband or telecommunications services.

- c. The application must show that the grant funds requested will be used for the sole purpose of constructing broadband infrastructure in the underserved areas covered by the application. Construction of broadband infrastructure may include any of the following:
 - Project planning that takes place during the performance period.
 - Obtaining construction permits.
 - Construction of facilities, including construction of both "middle mile" and "last mile" infrastructure.
 - Installation and testing of the broadband service.

Grant funds requested will all be used for the <u>sole purpose</u> of constructing broadband infrastructure in the underserved areas in the Towns of Curran and Northfield. This includes project planning that takes place during the performance period; obtaining construction permits; construction of the last mile infrastructure; and installation and testing of the broadband service.

3.2.4 Priority factors supporting the application

- a. Matching funds. A description of the matching funds the applicant will invest in the proposed project, if any. For each element, indicate the type of match (cash, salary expense, or in-kind contribution). If the application is submitted by a partnership, identify the partner responsible for providing each element of the proposed matching funds. Note: The requirement for this information is satisfied via inclusion of the completed Funding Statement as page 4 of the application.
 - If available, provide documentation to support an offer of matching funds (minutes of a town board meeting, a letter from a prospective customer or local government official, etc.).

This project received matching funds from all three school districts, 13 businesses, 2 health care organizations, and 18 individual residents. Please see Funding Statement on page 4 of this application for a complete breakdown of matching funds. Written commitment of matching funds are included in the Attachments.

- b. <u>Public-private partnerships</u>. If the public-private partnership is memorialized in a joint venture agreement or other writing, provide a copy of that agreement. If the partnership has not been reduced to a written agreement, provide a short description of the management role, financial commitment, or other contribution to the project for each participating partner.
 - In scoring this element, information regarding active engagement of diverse communities in the planning, permitting, or marketing of the project will be given weight as well.

Tri-County and the Towns of Curran and Northfield will enter into a partnership to build FTTH to those in the underserved/unserved project. The partnerships are memorialized in resolutions passed by each Town Board and included in the Attachments. The Town of Curran conducted a survey of 188 property owners and received a 44% response rate. Most of the people that didn't return surveys are either vacant land owners/investors/sand mine addresses and not from the project area. A summary is included in the Attachments. Survey results showed active engagement of 83 residents, businesses and seasonal property owners in the planning of the project, as witnessed by 63 letters of support in the Attachments. This active engagement on the front end will aid in marketing FTTH service upon completion.

Tri-County will manage the construction of the network, own, and maintain the network when complete. Tri-County and the Towns will work together on planning of the construction to be prepared for future road projects and housing expansion. Tri-County will work with the Towns on marketing and

customer education so that all residents are taking advantage of the services and opportunities that FTTH broadband connection can provide. Tri-County also provides classes to customers and non-customers, called TCC-U, which educate about available services and their use with broadband.

- c. <u>Existing broadband service</u>. A list of the broadband service providers, if any, currently serving the area the applicant proposes to serve. In scoring this element, the following factors will be taken into account:
 - The degree to which the proposed project avoids duplicating existing broadband infrastructure.
 - The application of a wireless broadband service provider proposing significant overlap with existing broadband service in addition to service to an unserved area will not be given priority consideration.
 - Provide a list of all landline broadband service providers (DSL, cable or fiber to the home) and fixed wireless broadband service providers that overlap the footprint of the proposed broadband project.
 - If known, provide an estimate of the customers within the proposed footprint that are served by competing landline and fixed wireless broadband service providers, and the download/upload speeds offered by those competing service providers.
 - Provide a list of mobile wireless broadband service providers that overlap the footprint of the proposed project.
 - If known, provide an estimate of the customers within the proposed footprint that are served by competing mobile wireless broadband service providers, and the download/upload speeds offered by those competing service providers.

The existing wireline provider located within the Project area is CenturyLink/Lumen. Per the Wisconsin PSC Broadband Map, the highest speed shown available to the residents in the project area is 40 mbps x 3 mbps. The PSC Broadband Map shows this to be available to only 8 of the locations in the Project area in the underserved areas. The PSC Broadband map shows that in areas of the project, CenturyLink/Lumen provides speeds of 10 mbps x 1 mbps. Real world testing of these speeds at residents homes have proven that these speeds are not reliably available. This service is provided through XDSL technology, which is a legacy technology that does not provide reliable broadband service. Because copper loops are used for XDSL technology these broadband speeds are significantly reduced as the length of the copper loop increases. Tri-County's position, based on comments and letters of support from resident and business locations within the Project area, is that there is not a provider providing reliable broadband service of 25 Mbps down and 3 Mbps up, or 5 Mbps down and 600 Kbps up, to 100% of the Project area. This is also supported by the Towns commitment to partner with Tri-County to bring broadband to the underserved/unserved areas. The Wisconsin PSC Broadband Maps indicate that both Bug Tussel Wireless and T-Mobile provide fixed wireless service in the Underserved areas of the project. Due to the hilly terrain and the heavily forested location, these services are very limited in their ability to serve residents.

The following chart is based on speed test data gathered from the community survey and letters of support.

Address	Download mbps	Upload mbps
W14629 E Adams Road, Hixton	15	0.5
W14621 E Adams Rd, Hixton	17	1.3
N3086 Kelly Road, Black River Falls	10	1
N9514 County Road FF, Hixton	20	1.5
N4331 County X, Black River Falls	12.5	0.5
W14993 Fall Coulee Rd. Hixton	0.23	0.38
N9631 Tyler Rd, Hixton	7	1.1
W15056 State Rd. 95, Taylor	30	1.5
N9050 Pierce Rd. Hixton	26	6
W15513 State Rd. 95, Taylor	1.5	1
W15899 Berg Rd, Taylor	1	0.25
N8644 S. Adams Rd., Hixton	3	1
W15152 Green Acres Rd., Taylor	33	2
W14867 Fall Coulee Rd., Hixton	32	2.7
N9647 Tyler Rd., Hixton	5	1
N9109 Taft Rd., Hixton	10	1
N8840 N. Adams Rd., Hixton	1.5	0.5
N7856 Miller Rd., Hixton	10	0.5
W15101 Fall Coulee Rd., Hixton	3.03	0.47
W15918 State Rd. 95, Taylor	10	1.5
N7345 N. Davis Rd., Taylor	7	1.5

Current wireline and wireless providers in the <u>unserved</u> areas of the Project.

Wireline

CenturyLink 10 Mbps x 1 Mbps

Wireless

United States Cellular Corporation 2 Mbps x .064 Mbps

Current Wireline and Wireless providers in the <u>underserved</u> areas of the Project.

Wireline

CenturyLink 40 Mbps x 3 Mbps

Wireless

Bug Tussel 25 Mbps x 5 Mbps

United States Cellular Corporation 2 Mbps x .064 Mbps

T-Mobile 25 Mbps x 5 Mbps

TCC does not have an estimate of the customers within the proposed footprint that are served by competing landline and fixed wireless, nor an estimate of the customers within the proposed footprint that are served by competing mobile wireless broadband service providers.

d. Project impact. A description of the geographic area and the population, both in terms of absolute numbers and likely users, which will be served by the proposed project. Indicate the number of anticipated residential and business customers in the project area, if known. Explain the speed and quality of internet service that will be available. Include information about the range of packages available for purchase. Provide details on any low-income access programs and steps the project will take to support adoption.

The Towns of Curran and Northfield are located in a rural part of Northwest Jackson County. The terrain and the fact that this is a rural area makes this a very high cost area to build broadband. The Project covers 23 square miles of rural rolling hills, forested areas, and farmland. The project will bring last mile FTTH broadband to 165 unserved/underserved residential locations and 3 unserved/underserved businesses. Need updated numbers for businesses. Tri-County is currently realizing a take rate of approximately 80% in expansion projects. Tri-County, based on survey results from the Towns, is predicting this take rate to continue with this project. With this project, Tri-County will be able to provide reliable speeds at a minimum of 100 mbps x 100 mbps up to 1 Gbps x 1 Gbps. Speeds up to 10 Gig will be available in future offerings. Available broadband speeds and costs will be as follows.

100 Mbps x 100 Mbps \$49.95 250 Mbps x 250 Mbps \$69.95 500 Mbps x 500 Mbps \$99.95 1 Gbps 1 Gbps \$199.95

As an Eligible Telecommunications Carrier Tri-County provides discounts to resident customers for broadband service in accordance with Section PSC 160.062 Lifeline Program of the Wisconsin Administrative Code and FCC regulations for Lifeline support. Tri-County works directly with all local school districts to identify students that are not connected to a broadband service, and determine if Tri-County has facilities at that student's home location to be provided at reasonable rates. Tri-County has registered with the Affordable Connectivity Program in an effort to provide broadband services to those that qualify for that program.

- e. <u>Scalability</u>. A description of how the proposed project could expand or improve the broadband service it delivers, while maintaining the quality of its broadband service. This description should include specific projected increases in the following parameters that are known at the time of the application:
 - The number of users.
 - The number of network nodes.
 - The number of services provided.
 - The geographic area served by the project.
 - The number of aggregation points in middle mile project.

This description may also include a discussion of possible growth potential that is outside the commitment the applicant is making as part of its application.

Tri-County currently provides broadband to the served portions of the Towns. We provide this with a 100% fiber to the home network. Tri-County can effectively build on the existing network in place in our

served area to expand broadband service to the Project area. Tri-County has enough middle mile capacity to provide the broadband services at speed levels that are required today, and well into the future. Tri-County already has electronics in place to provide the broadband service. Along with broadband services, all residents of the Towns would be able to have access to telephone and television services that Tri-County provides. Jackson County is working very hard with all communities to bring reliable broadband to 100% of its residents. TCC has had informational meetings with the adjacent Towns of Cleveland, Garfield, Garden Valley and Hixton. All of these Towns have some underserved areas and have expressed interest in future broadband projects. This Project will be built to allow expansion into these adjacent areas at any time that funding would become available. Included with this application is a letter of support from the Town of Garden Valley to contribute \$3000 to extend service to 6 locations located in close proximity of the project boundary. If this Grant is successfully awarded, Tri-County will extend to these locations in Garden Valley. A letter of support is also included from a home business located on Taylor Rd on the Town of Curran, Town of Springfield line. They state, "We have tried DSL and satellite internet, but it is way to slow for today environment and expectation". This project will be built with the capacity to serve this location. These are examples of the additional impact that this project can have on the surrounding area.

- f. <u>Economic development</u>. A description of how the proposed project will promote job growth or retention, expand the property tax base or improve the overall economic vitality of the municipality or region. This description may be supplemented with a letter from one or more persons discussing the potential economic impact the project could have for that individual or business. In scoring this element, the following factors will be taken into account:
 - A discussion of potential economic impact the project could have for an individual business located in the project area.
 - An explanation of how an improved download and upload transmission speed could better support a specific business in the project area.
 - An explanation of the likely impact improved broadband service could have on residential property values, supported by local sales data if available.
 - A demonstration of how improved broadband service to a residential portion of the project could benefit a telecommuting population.
 - A demonstration of how the speeds and service being offered by the project fits with current and future economic needs of the community and local businesses.

While very rural, the Towns of Curran and Northfield are home to 23 small businesses, many home-based and entrepreneurial. Residents are hard working and creative at building wealth for themselves and their families. Twenty-one respondents to the Curran survey indicated a business is run out of their home. Here are some of their stories the economic impact on specific businesses and how improved transmission speed could help their business. Letters of support are attached.

Gathje Greenhouse: We operate a small greenhouse in northeastern Curran Township. Like any business, we face the challenges of supply chain, inflation, energy, labor, etc. Unlike many however, we do not have equal access to high-speed internet. Today's world demands it. Many businesses require doing business online and via e-mail, and the usage of podcasts/streaming for education and

information has only exploded during COVID and will continue. Many of our trade shows are only online now, and much of our purchasing is done that way. Solid internet connections are essential.

Nehringland Farms: Ag business is constantly changing and I need to be on the internet to track crop prices in our area and the stock market, I use it for tracking down new equipment to use on my farm, and to keep in contact with our local — Allied, agribusiness agent to help with putting in the crops. Certain tractors also use the internet to help with putting in the crops and also with spraying the crops, too. Therefore, internet use is becoming more and more useful in our business. I need to keep up with the times and internet services should as well.

Olson Farms: On our farm, we have 50-70 cows milking at all times and 60-70 steers. We have 420 acres that we cash crop. We are currently trying to implement more precision farming through GPS planting, spraying and combining. To do this, it would be very helpful to have a reliable internet source to download the set mapping from our GPS to our computer. It would also be beneficial having internet for uploading documents for crop insurance purposes, and USDA mapping. With a new dairy facility hopefully coming by Summer of 2022, we would like to be able to implement cow activity monitors to help monitor general herd health in which some systems require internet system. We would also like to have Wi-Fi cameras to monitor our calving maternity ward.

Emma Jo Karls: I am an Independent Beauty Consultant with Mary Kay Cosmetics. Most of my business functions (training, team sales meetings, shipping labels, customer communications, and ordering) are done at home. I have goals to grow my business, and one roadblock has been the lack of broadband internet.

Jensen Towing & Repair: Been in business since 2006. Re-invested in our business by adding a new repair shop and employ 3 fulltime people. If this project is funded I will be able to better support my business from home which will lead to more efficiencies.

Jeske Equestrian – Boarding & Training – Lessons and Back 40 Outdoors Campground (Start-up business): Multiple times we have missed calls and reservations along with new boarding or training lessons due to poor connectivity in our area. This costs us customers and revenue.

Jonathon Sedelbauer, Entrepreneur: In the past we were making money from YouTube by uploading videos and getting paid for the advertisements included in the videos. Our current internet upload speed is extremely poor and makes uploading videos to YouTube a challenge. On our current speed it is not even possible to upload all content because if an upload doesn't complete within about 20 hours the upload will fail. It makes it hard to make money on the internet when your speeds don't allow you to upload all the content.

Greta Gearing: I have started a small side business from home and having high speed internet would be very helpful because I will be using the internet to sell and market my products.

Larger businesses serving the Towns of Curan and Northfield also weighed in on how this project fits with current and future economic needs of the community and local businesses.

Oakwood Bank: As we continue to recruit new employees, residential broadband service is an essential quality of life issue for relocation. Without this vital piece of infrastructure, we will lose qualified young employees to other regions or other states.

Smart Sand: Although not operational now as our business evaluates the potential for future development of our site, broadband service would make a positive contribution to the success of our business as well as supporting the relocation and retention of current and future employees.

Flexible work locations continue to be widely adopted by employers in Jackson County and beyond as evidenced by attached letters of support. In fact, there are a number of residents in Curran and Franklin who work for employers outside Wisconsin.

One resident reported she wants to work remotely but can't because home internet is too slow. Thus she makes a 30+ mile trip/5 days a week. Another stated she lost a job offer because her home internet is too slow. Another resident summed it up as follows: "With our current internet speeds, changing jobs within our current careers is impossible. If we had faster internet speeds we could work from home in a different job role but currently that is not an option. Therefore, our current internet speeds are negatively impacting our personal career development.

We spoke with an individual who officially lives in the Twin Cities, but owns a second home in Curran. He loves the peace and quiet and would like to spend more time in Jackson County. However, "My wife and I both run businesses out of our home and because of our limited access to broadband, we are unable to efficiently operate our businesses here. This is a distinct competitive disadvantage for our success."

There is a direct relationship between high-speed Internet access and residential property values. We do not have local sales data for this lightly-populated area, so we cite national literature. From an article published pre-pandemic in <u>Applied Economics</u> in 2019: "Results show that single-family homes with access to a 25 Mbps broadband connection have a price that is about \$5,977, or 3%, more than similar homes in neighborhoods with 1 Mbps. The rural premium is lower at \$5,099." Post-pandemic, one may assume that 3% is a low estimate.

Using Jackson County property records and assessed values from 2020, we ran a report on all residential and homestead property in Curran and Northfield and came up with a value of \$58.9 million. A minimal 3% increase in value would add \$1.76 million to residential property value with consistent access to high speed internet.

Perhaps most telling is this anecdotal information from local REALTOR Steve Johnson in his attached letter of support: "I can tell you that even before the COVID issue in 2020, there were buyers that would not buy a house (or even request a showing) if the property did not have internet where one could work remotely from home. As you can imagine, that has gotten worse as now more people are working remotely, requiring quality internet. This shows that quality internet also affects home values and the ability to sell your home. I have read that a home with good internet, increases the value of the home by up to \$10,000. Again I am currently working with a couple that will not even look at a home unless it has high-speed internet as the wife works from home."

g. Effect upon broadband service to adjacent areas. A description of whether the proposed project will or will not impair the ability of a broadband service provider or competing broadband service provider to extend broadband service to areas adjacent to the proposed project area.

The Curran/Northfield FTTH Project proposed by Tri-County will have no impact on another provider's ability to provide service in adjacent areas to the Project area. The Towns are very rural and are very costly to build, and probably would never be built, without support of the Wisconsin Broadband Expansion Grant. The rolling hills and heavy timbered areas of much of the project area, limit the use of fixed wireless as a service that can provide to 100% of the project area, or adjacent areas.

3.2.5 Other information supporting the application

- a. A description of applicant's history or experience constructing broadband communications facilities in the State and elsewhere.
 - If applicable, an applicant must comment upon the status of all prior broadband expansion grant projects, including the type of broadband technology used, the facility route actually built or installed, the number of residential and business customers actually connected, and other relevant details of the prior project(s).
 - An applicant may also comment on broadband construction projects undertaken in prior years that were not funded in part by the Broadband Expansion Grant program.

Tri-County Communications has been providing telecommunications service in its designated ILEC territory since 1964. Tri-County was able to upgrade its Northfield ILEC Exchange, which covers the majority of the Town of Northfield, to the first private line phone system in the State of Wisconsin in 1966. In 1996 Tri-County started offering internet services. In 2006 Tri-County merged with Western Wisconsin Communications Cooperative, the only Cable TV cooperative in the nation, and the first in the world to provide a distance learning solution that served 7 local school districts. In 2008 Tri-County started a FTTH project to roughly 4000 residences and businesses in its ILEC territories. This project was funded in part with a \$17 million Rural Utilities Service loan. This project was completed in 2014 and is now serving all residents with a minimum speed of 100 Mbps x 100 Mbps, with speeds up to 1 Gbps available. Tri-County has also been working since 2006 to replace the coaxial service outside the ILEC areas to a FTTH network. Over the last 14 years, Tri-County has invested in excess of \$30 million in broadband upgrades to our members.

In 2014, Tri-County was recognized at the National level as a Smart Rural Community by NTCA – the Rural Broadband Association – for our ongoing efforts to improve the data network and overall technology culture in our area. Tri-County has also received the "GIG Certified" designation by NTCA, which certifies that the Tri-County network is capable of speeds up to 1 Gigabit per second (Gbps).

In 2021, Tri-County was awarded two Wisconsin Broadband Expansion Grants. The Town of Drammen FTTH project was a partnership with the Town of Drammen, and brought service to 162 unserved/underserved locations in the town. Construction of this project completed in early February

of 2022. Currently, approximately 80 of the locations have been connected, with the remainder to be completed through 2022. Tri-County was also awarded a grant in 2021 for Newcomb Valley FTTH outside of the City of Arcadia. This project is 90% complete and installation of services to customers is planned to start in March of 2022.

In 2021, Tri-County was awarded two ARPA Broadband Expansion grants. The Town of Naples FTTH in Buffalo County and the Town of Alma FTTH in Jackson County are scheduled to start in the spring and summer of 2021. Combined, these projects will provide reliable FTTH broadband to 518 locations.

b. A description of how the proposed project will or will not duplicate existing broadband infrastructure.

The Curran/Northfield FTTH project will not duplicate existing broadband service in the Project area. It is Tri-County and the Towns position that reliable broadband connections that meet the requirement of 25 mbps x 3 mbps are not available to the residents and businesses in the project area. This is supported by speed test data included in Section 3.2.4.c.

c. A description of an applicant's financial ability to undertake the proposed broadband construction project.
This may include information such as the number of years the company has been in operation, documentation of successful completion of similar infrastructure projects, evidence that sufficient funds are available to cover project expenditure and match, customer turn-over rates, and credit rating.

In Section 3.2.5 (a) above we detailed the history of Tri-County Communications and documented successful completion of similar infrastructure projects. Tri-County is in a strong financial position and has reserves in excess of \$6,000,000 to help pay for the costs of the Project. Tri-County has seen an increase in membership of 11% over the last two years with an 86% take rate of our broadband services. Tri-County was able to pay off its \$17 million RUS loan for the ILEC FTTH build in 2020, and currently has no debt.

- d. This is not a middle mile project.
- e. This is not a middle mile project.
- f. A description of how the proposed project will affect the ability of individuals to access health care service from home, including any impact upon the costs of those services.
 - Specific information from a hospital or clinic in the project area that currently uses or intends to use home-based telemedicine equipment to enhance access health care service would best illustrate this point.

Of the 83 community survey respondents, 37 indicated interest in using telehealth services.

Black River Memorial Hospital is the only in-patient comprehensive healthcare facility in Jackson County. In addition to telehealth appointments, in its **attached letter of support** it indicated it has dedicated clinicians that travel to patient's homes that require post-hospital, palliative and Hospice care. These

clinicians need higher speed broadband to be effective and efficient to deliver the excellent care patients deserve. Providing this type of care in-home reduces complications and avoids costly rehospitalization.

Marshfield Clinic Health System has provided over 400,000 telehealth visits in the past 2 years. It serves patients in the project area at its clinics and hospital in Eau Claire. In its **attached letter of support**, it likewise noted that telehealth appointments demand a high-speed connection, and this project addresses a significant area of broadband deficiency in its service area.

Tri-County Hospital in Whitehall also offers telemedicine appointments to its patients in the project area, linking with specialists in La Crosse and Onalaska.

National studies provide evidence of cost savings with the use of telehealth services. In a pre-COVID-19 study of 40,000 Cigna beneficiaries, the 20,000 beneficiaries who used the MDLive telehealth platform had 17% lower costs when compared with non-virtual care. Virtual care users also experienced a 36% net reduction in ED use per 1,000 people compared to non-virtual care users (Healthcare IT News). The National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA) Report of the Taskforce on Telehealth Policy discusses a variety of evidence that the use of telehealth services lowers the overall cost of care. We are confident that this national data can be extrapolated to this project area. Considering that in-person health care services are 20 or more miles away for residents of the Towns of Curran and Northfield, use of telehealth also results in savings related to travel and time away from work or school.

- g. A description of how the proposed project will affect the ability of students to access educational opportunities from home.
 - Specific information on the likely number of students that will benefit from improved access to educational opportunities from home would be useful.
 - Specific information regarding educational programs that are currently available for students in the project area would be useful.

The Towns of Curran and Northfield are served by three K-12 school districts: Black River Falls, Blair-Taylor and Whitehall. Each school district has provided match funds and described their district needs in attached letters of support. In total they currently serve 22 K-12 students in the project area. Their match funds are for the current students and future students and families that will move to this area because it will have access to fiber-to-the-home broadband.

The project area is also home to students in higher education. While we are not able to ascertain exact numbers (survey results reported 8), we heard from several residents: "I have two daughters who are taking college classes...;" and "I finished my master's degree last year and that was very difficult for me as I had to drive to my parents' house to work on all of my assignments because it was all online." Other letters shared frustration with being unable to reliably access continuing education for business or to maintain a professional license. For example, volunteer Fire and Emergency Responders are required to do online training from State of Wisconsin to keep up with their re-certification. A Town election official noted having to watch training videos where "The video played for 2-3 seconds and then paused for 3-5 minutes causing a total disruption of learning."

There are many online educational programs currently available for students of all ages in the project area. While K-12 schools have largely returned to in-person instruction, the School District of Black River

Falls offers a full virtual option. The Blair-Taylor District offers a virtual Read Across America Program. With improved internet access, families in the project area may wish to open-enroll in accredited online schools such as Acellus Academy, Virtual Charter Schools, or the Wisconsin Connections Academy. Western Technical College offers 16 programs totally on-line, as well as "Flexible Learning Options" which combine in-person and online instruction. All University of Wisconsin campuses, as well as most private colleges and universities, offer online classes and degrees.

While student learning is of paramount importance, the ability of teachers to teach those students is also a consideration.

From a kindergarten teacher: "I was expected to teach reading and math lessons virtually every single day for an hour and then be available via email throughout the rest of the day. Since we don't have internet at home, I was having to pack up my son and drive to Blair (20 minute drive) every day so I could use my parents internet. We do have internet on our phones but it isn't fast enough or reliable enough to count on to reach all of my students. Even before the pandemic, and as things get back to normal, not having internet at home causes stress because I can't work from home at all meaning I have to go into work on the weekends just so I can access the online materials and prep for the week. Being able to work on my computer in the evenings would save me from having to stay late at school or from having to go in on weekends."

Two examples from higher education:

"I teach on-line courses for University of Wisconsin system campuses at Madison, River Falls, Superior, and Parkside. When I'm teaching from our WI home, I frequently have unacceptably long wait times for downloading and sketchy video buffering creating frustrating viewing. I've also experienced periodic internet service interruptions forcing me to drive (28 miles round trip) to utilize the Black River Falls Public Library internet system to facilitate on-line class management."

From an instructor at Western Technical College: "I need for my students to have access to reliable high-speed internet to complete their classes. The biggest frustration has been that students attending synchronized classes cannot leave their video up while trying to listen to the audio as well as viewing any electronic presentation because their internet service is too slow. My frustration is that first year students need to develop a relationship with the Instructor to be fully successful in an already stressful circumstances. That can only happen when I can see their faces and tell whether what I am doing is engaging. The success of our students is dependent on this grant. Please don't let us down."

- h. A description of actions taken by a city, village, town, or county in support of the grant application that have not been discussed in the context of a public-private partnership above, including but not limited to:
 - The contribution of funds, easements or permissions to use publicly-owned real estate, construction materials, or other items of value to the grant project.
 - The contribution of in-kind assistance to the grant project in the form of waived fees and expenses for obtaining use permits and permissions.
 - The contribution of other items of benefit to the grant project, such as public outreach and education, vehicles, water, etc.

 Certification as a Broadband Forward! Community or Telecommuter Forward! Community.

Major public education and outreach has already been undertaken as evidenced by the community survey. If this project is funded, the Town of Curran will host a public meeting/open house at its Town Hall for Curran and Northfield residents and representatives of TCC. The purpose will be to educate the public on the project timeline, service packages, Affordable Connectivity Program, and internet adoption for those who may want to learn more.

i. Letters and messages in support of the application submitted by prospective customers, local government officials, and other interested persons.

Attached to this application is a list of "curated comments" taken from the 63 letters of support received.

- j. Any other equitable factor that the applicant desires to discuss, including one or more of the factors in Wis. Stat. § 196.03(6) that the applicant believes its project would advance. In discussing this element, the following information may be useful:
 - Technical support and training materials that the applicant intends to provide.
 - Information that the applicant intends to use to promote better broadband adoption and use.
 - A description of a program or outreach to provide assistance to individuals of low income.

Tri-County provides various programs and outreach to provide assistance to individuals of low income, including the following:

- As an Eligible Telecommunications Carrier Tri-County provides discounts to resident customers for broadband service in accordance with Section PSC 160.062 Lifeline Program of the Wisconsin Administrative Code and FCC regulations for Lifeline support.
- Tri-County also works directly with all local school districts to identify students that are not connected to a broadband service and determine if Tri-County has facilities at that student's home location.

With the increased use of technology for daily activities and the movement by many businesses and schools to operating remotely during the pandemic, broadband has become even more critical for people across the country to carry out their daily lives. Tri-County's minimum internet speed is 100 Mbps symmetrical for download and upload. Tri-County's all fiber optic infrastructure will sufficiently meet household needs, including the ability to support the simultaneous use of work, education, and health applications, and also sufficiently meet increasing household demands for bandwidth.

Tri-County provides up-front Information to all potential customers to promote better broadband adoption and use. We complete premise visits to every address to discuss Fiber-to-the-Home (FTTH)

with all of our grant projects. We provide the new customers with a packet of information, including the stages of building our all-fiber optic network to them. At that time, customers sign our permission slips to bury fiber optics on their property, and more often than not, customers select the services bundle they want to have installed. There is no need to lock the customers into any contract; we know bringing a future proof all-fiber network is mission critical. Our mindset is to build it once and to build it right.

Tri-County realizes the importance of the services we provide to those in our communities. As a Cooperative, we have a responsibility to our members to provide these services at the lowest cost and to work with all current and prospective members on the best way to use these services. Tri-County provides information on how to enroll programs for low-income individuals through Lifeline Support and the Affordable Connectivity Program. Tri-County also provides educational opportunities through our TCC-U Classes along with educational and instructional videos on internet use.

Affordable Connectivity Program acceptance confirmation

Welcome to the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP). Your election to participate is complete. You have been assigned the following Study Area Code(s) (SAC) for the ACP:

Provider Name/Affiliate Name	SPIN*	Study Area Code	State
Tri-County Communications Cooperative, Inc.	143001845	833101	WI
Tri-West Communications	200000806	833102	WI

Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Project - Curated Comments

The Towns of Curran and Northfield are located in a very rural area of the Northwest part of Jackson County, approximately 16 miles from Black River Falls, 45 miles from Eau Claire and 50 miles from La Crosse. Hilly terrain makes it difficult to even get a reliable cell phone signal. This application provides evidence of how the Project will promote economic development and telecommuting, serve K-12 students as well as college and adult continuing education, and facilitate adoption of telemedicine services. Below are curated comments from the 63 letters of support received, all of which are attached to the application.

Greg Gearing, dairy farmer – Currently the only access to internet is on my cell phone and it is very difficult as the cell coverage is not the best. area of concern is that there are many businesses that want us to pay bills onlineand we do not have that option. My bank even wants us to go paperless and do our banking online, even saying they will charge for paper copies of statements to be mailed. My parents are having a lot of doctor appointments and they have the option of having video appointments, but they cannot use that option without internet.

Allied Cooperative - Allied Cooperative is a \$200 million cooperative serving customers throughout west central Wisconsin, including those in the town of Curran/Jackson County region. Our customers range from agricultural and businesses to local homeowners. Like most businesses today we rely on the internet for our sales and marketing efforts as well as the ability to communicate with customers. The adoption of advanced precision agriculture technology and farm information management systems has become a critical part of our customers' business. In order to increase yields and compete in today's increasingly competitive marketplace the need for reliable, high-speed internet is critical.

Aaron Boi – My upholstery business uses the internet to order parts, stream meetings with clients/suppliers, and review assembly videos to keep up on new processes and techniques. Currently trying to use just my cell phone to do business and find this to be challenging and difficult at the same time.

My wife must log into her work, run live programs from the company's secure VPN, and have meetings throughout the day. This cannot be done at our current residence. She packs her computer up and goes into Taylor to be able to do her job from a relative's home.

Diane Heusi – We live in a valley where satellite, cell tower or phone line internet are either not available, or they are slow and unreliable. I would like to work from home but without fast, internet I must travel 5 days a week, 30+ miles per day.

Sampson Heating – With today's HVAC technology that contains Wi-Fi components, broadband would be a valuable asset for residents, customers and businesses like ours. It would help us to better service the Town of Curran customers more efficiently,

Emma Jo Karls - My husband works for a world-wide agriculture company as a territory manager servicing the Western Wisconsin area. His role is supported by an in-home office. Zoom calls and webinars have become a very regular tool for his company. Online training classes, seed ordering, research, data-systems website, and email are vital to his productivity.

Kelly Olson - My job required me to work from home this last year also and I too had difficulty meeting the requirements for my job also because of the inadequate internet service.

Trinity Farms - We have a grain bin site with a grain dryer unit located in Curran Township that uses internet to monitor the grain dryer. It would be a benefit to have the bandwidth speed to better monitor that dryer unit. We have twelve employees, three of those employees live in the Curran/Northfield area that this broadband would be a benefit to.

MaryAnn Lippert - my family owns recreational property in Jackson County that has been in the family for over 100 years. As 3rd generation family members approach retirement, we want to spend more time on the property, and some may even consider building a year-round residence, thereby increasing the tax base. As 4th generation family members complete college and begin their work careers, it's apparent that many would be interested in extending their stay from a long weekend to a full week if they could work remotely. Both situations translate into greater economic impact for local businesses. I'm sure we are not the only family that this applies to.

Todd and Melissa Erickson - The pandemic has further increased the need to be able to work and attend school from home. It is essential to have internet services that can support that expectation.

Randi Arneson - As a Registered Nurse and mother of a high school student, high speed internet is essential. I work from home with a blended schedule and utilize the internet for my work. When I initially moved into my current house, I purchased satellite internet. Speeds and capabilities with this form of service were not sufficient to allow for this work schedule. I was forced to look for other options or look for a new employer. I then purchased internet through my cell phone carrier. This service can be spotty and somewhat slow. Having a high school student further adds to the strain of my internet services. He often needs to complete homework assignments and even occasionally school itself utilizing the internet. Our current service then becomes very taxed and slow making it difficult for both him and I to use the internet at the same time. Funding this broadband program would help families like myself both personally and professionally as well as allow students to complete their education using a variety of learning modalities.

The Towns of Curran and Northfield are served by 3 school districts: Black River Falls, Blair-Taylor and Whitehall. Each has written a letter of support and committed match funds.

Mac & Ashley Bowen – There is recent to suggest that a lack of access to the internet negatively affects student achievement. Here is an excerpt from a study done through the National Center for Educational Statistics: "The

indicators in Section 3 show higher average achievemtn scores for students who use computers at home and/or had internet access at home than for those who did not.....8th graders who are without internet access are, on average, 27 months behind their peers who do have access."

Jeff Hefty - We have two daughters attending college. The lectures would run in bits and pieces making it difficult to concentrate and get the most out of them.

Todd and Melissa Erickson - The pandemic has further increased the need to be able to work and attend school from home. It is essential to have internet services that can support that expectation.

Michelle Schwenneker - As the Town Clerk, I am responsible for training our election staff. In the "old days" which is not that long ago, I would have to send election inspectors to state approved election training. Now my election workers are of the generation that uses the "computer". As a result, I asked them to start using the Wisconsin Election Commission webinars to supplement their training. I was however very surprised when I was told they could not do webinars at home due to their slow internet service. This is when I first became aware that much of my township does not have high speed internet.

Ian and Samantha Remus - As a School District employee I had to perform zoom meeting from home for work. Not having internet service here in rural Jackson County is hard. I had to use my mobile data from my smart phone to complete my work from home during the pandemic. Which was a challenge with slow connection which caused glitching and lagging or loss of connection during teaching moments.

Tom Piecuch - We currently have an internet provider with speeds that are constantly inadequate. Our inability to use the internet for everything from ordering medicines to hardware and providing site security to our property is almost impossible. Our speed should be 1.1 to 1.25 mbps. This is when the internet is working, but the constant battle with the provider has not improved their service. We do not have any other choices, even satellite service is not available because of the terrain restrictions. During the process of writing this note, the speed test on my internet was .35mbps download and .32 mbps upload.

<u>Black River Memorial Hospital</u> and <u>Marshfield Clinic Health System</u> each provided compelling evidence for improved health care in letters of support that are attached.

Hixton Fire/EMS - Emergency services are becoming more and more dependent on digital technology and services for communication, navigation, pre-planning, incident reporting, education and training. This project will assist our organization immensely in assuring we are able to meet our obligations as related to these critical components.

Jonathan and Janessa Sedelbauer - Higher speed internet would bring our family the option to use telehealth services, currently we do not have that option as the likelihood of being disconnected mid visit is very likely. In fact one of us is a healthcare provider and could be employed in telehealth services if our internet speeds supported it.

Allen Jacobson - Now as I enter into the autumn of my life, I find myself increasingly in need of medical communication through the Veterans Administration online services.

David West - Due to the pandemic, we had times where our healthcare appointments were conducted online in a web-based venue. We would completely lose signal, get kicked off and then have to try to log back on or have the screen randomly freeze. Due to this, there was loss of effective congruent communication which is so important with anything healthcare related.

Summary of Additional Contributions

Sammary	of Additional Contributions	
School Districts:	Black River Falls SD	4000
	Blair-Taylor School Dist.	6271
	Whitehall School Dist.	5000
Mining Companies:	Badger Mining Corp.	1000
	AMI Silica	10000
	Smart Sand	2000
Healthcare:	Black River Memorial	1000
	Marshfield Clinic	20000
Banking:	Coop Credit Union - BRF	200
	Security Financial Bank - BRF	200
	Black River Country Bank - BRF	200
	Oakwood Bank - Pigeon Falls	100
Business:	Scott Construction	100
	Hoffman Construction	100
	Matt Rhodes Rural Insurance	75
	Jensen Towing - Rick Bunell	300
	Alcivia Cooperative	100
	Gathje's Greenhouse	200
Residents/Individual/Home Business Pledge:	Genell Severson	500
	Allen Jacobson	500
	Mary Ann Lippert	100
	Emma Karls - Mary Kay Independent Beauty Consultant	150
	Michelle Schwenneker	50
	Craig Jeske - Jeske Equestrian & Back 40 Outdoors	200
	Dan and Lisa Ripp	100
	Tom and Dawn Piecuch	200
	Diane Heusi	50
	Toni Lindberg	100
	David West	50
	Randi Arneson	50
	Todd and Denise Olson	750
	Cathie Slenczka	50
	David Ernst	100
	Jon and Jenessa Sedelbauer	300
	Jeff Hefty	75
	Greta Gearing	200
	Chris Halvorson	200

RESOLUTION #2022-01 TRI COUNTY COMMUNICATIONS BROADBAND EXPANSION of

TOWN OF CURRAN Jackson County, Wisconsin

The Town of Curran, a Wisconsin Municipality, acting pursuant to its authority under Wisconsin Statutes, hereby consents to the following resolutions, with said consent to have the same force and effect as a unanimous vote thereon:

WHEREAS, Tri County Communications, desires to commence a project consisting of the construction and operation of certain wireless and fiber optic communications services to provide the most advanced infrastructure to unserved and underserved residents of the Town of Curran;

WHEREAS, The Town of Curran, in recognition of the broadband underserved areas of its community, seeks to enter into a quasi-public/private venture to obtain, maintain and increase broadband coverage for the support of education, health care, growth of business, retention of existing business, tourism promotion, and overall economic vitality and sustainability;

WHEREAS, The Town of Curran desires to pursue a Broadband Expansion Grant offered by and through the State of Wisconsin Public Service Commission;

WHEREAS, Tri County Communications is willing and able to partner with the Town of Curran to provide the latest advancements in broadband coverage and to seek all available grants available to provide and subsidize the cost of necessary broadband infrastructure; and

WHEREAS, The Town of Curran desires to pursue and make application for any and all grant money available for broadband coverage with the assistance of Tri County Communications.

NOW, THEREFORE, be it resolved by the undersigned as follows:

RESOLVED, that the Town of Curran authorizes the application to the State of Wisconsin Public Service for a Broadband Expansion Grant in partnership with Tri County Communications; and

RESOLVED FURTHER, that the Town of Curran, subject to additional negotiations and approvals, will enter into a Development Agreement by and between Tri County Communications; and

RESOLVED FURTHER, that the Town of Curran, will, upon approval of the grant application by the Public Service Commission and execution of the Development Agreement, provide matching funds in the amount of \$184,600.00; and

RESOLVED FURTHER, that the duly appointed Town of Curran representative is authorized to do all such acts and to execute, acknowledge and deliver all such documents as he or she may be authorized by the Curran Town Board to be necessary or desirable in order to carry out and comply with the terms and provisions of these resolutions, and all of the acts of the Town of Curran which are in conformity with the intent and purposes of these resolutions, whether previously or subsequently taken or done, are in all respects ratified, approved and confirmed; and

RESOLVED FURTHER, that all prior acts of the Town of Curran in furtherance of the transactions contemplated by the within resolutions be and are hereby approved; and

RESOLVED FURTHER, that all prior resolutions of the undersigned or any parts thereof in conflict with any or all of the foregoing resolutions are repealed to the extent of such conflict.

Dated: February 14, 2022

Signed 3/14/22

Matthew of House Chairman

Chairman

Melleand A. Hulet Supervise

RESOLUTION OF Town of _NORTHFIELD_ JACKSON COUNTY

The Town ofNORTHFIELD, a Wisconsin Municipality, acting pursuant to its authority under Wisconsin Statutes, hereby consents to the following resolutions, with said consent to have the same force and effect as a unanimous vote thereon:
WHEREAS, Tri County Communications, desires to commence a project consisting of the construction and operation of certain wireless and fiber optic communications services to provide the most advanced infrastructure to unserved and underserved residents of the Town of
WHEREAS, The Town ofNORTHFIELD, in recognition of the broadband underserved areas of its community, seeks to enter into a quasi-public/private venture to obtain, maintain and increase broadband coverage for the support of education, health care, growth of business, retention of existing business, tourism promotion, and overall economic vitality and sustainability;
WHEREAS, The Town ofNORTHFIELD desires to pursue a Broadband Expansion Grant offered by and through the State of Wisconsin Public Service Commission;
WHEREAS, Tri County Communications is willing and able to partner with the Town of NORTHFIELD to provide the latest advancements in broadband coverage and to seek all available grants available to provide and subsidize the cost of necessary broadband infrastructure; and
WHEREAS , The Town ofNORTHFIELD desires to pursue and make application for any and all grant money available for broadband coverage with the assistance of Tri County Communications.
NOW, THEREFORE, be it resolved by the undersigned as follows:
RESOLVED , that the Town ofNORTHFIELD authorizes the application to the State of Wisconsin Public Service for a Broadband Expansion Grant in partnership with Tri County Communications; and
RESOLVED FURTHER , that the Town ofNORTHFIELD, subject to additional negotiations and approvals, will enter into a Development Agreement by and between Tri County Communications; and
RESOLVED FURTHER , that the Town ofNORTHFIELD, will, upon approval of the grant application by the Public Service Commission and execution of the Development Agreement, provide matching funds in the amount of \$_54,200; and
RESOLVED FURTHER, that the duly appointed Town ofNORTHFIELD representative is authorized to do all such acts and to execute, acknowledge and deliver all such documents as he or she may be authorized by theNORTHFIELD Town Board to be necessary or desirable in order to carry out and comply with the terms and provisions of these resolutions, and all of the acts of the Town of NORTHFIELD which are in conformity with the intent and purposes of these resolutions, whether previously or subsequently taken or done, are in all respects ratified, approved and confirmed; and

RESOLVED FURTHER, that all prior acts of the Town of NORTHFIELD in furtherance of the transactions contemplated by the within resolutions be and are hereby approved; and			
RESOLVED FURTHER , that all prior re conflict with any or all of the foregoing resolutions	solutions of the undersigned or any parts thereof in are repealed to the extent of such conflict.		
Dated:MARCH 3, 2022	, 2022		
	Richard A. Eniham Chairman		
	Ronald Monpervisor		
	Darold Lee Supervisor		
	By: Charon Soverson Clerk		

RESOLUTION DA.DI 2023

RE: AUTHORIZING BROADBAND MATCHING FUNDS FROM AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT FUNDS FOR BROADBAND EXPANSION IN TOWNS/VILLAGES LOCATED IN JACKSON COUNTY

WHEREAS, Various providers desire to commence projects consisting of the construction and operation of certain wireless and fiber optic communications services to provide the most advanced infrastructure to unserved and underserved residents in multiple Towns/Villages in Jackson County; and

WHEREAS, The Jackson County Board in recognition of the broadband underserved areas of its community, seeks to enter into a quasi-public/private venture to obtain, maintain and increase broadband coverage for the support of education, health care, growth of business, retention of existing business, tourism promotion, and overall economic vitality and sustainability; and

WHEREAS, The Jackson County Board desires to support Broadband Grants offered by and through the State of Wisconsin and Federal Entities; and

WHEREAS, Various providers are willing and able to partner with the Jackson County Board, Jackson County Towns and Jackson County Villages to provide the latest advancements in broadband coverage and to seek all available grants to provide and subsidize the cost of necessary broadband infrastructure; and

WHEREAS, The Jackson County Board desires to pursue and make application for any and all grant money available for broadband coverage with the assistance of these providers; and

WHEREAS, The Jackson County Board had previously approved providing matching funds in the amount of \$1,000,000 for an ARPA Broadband Access Grant in partnership with Bug Tussel Wireless which was not approved;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Jackson County Board authorizes and supports the application by Towns/Villages to the State of Wisconsin and Federal entities for Broadband grants in partnership with various providers; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Jackson County Board will return the \$1,000,000 previously earmarked for the ARPA Broadband Access Grant, which was not approved, to the ARPA restricted fund; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Jackson County Board will, upon approval of any grant application greater than \$1,000,000, provide matching funds in the amount of \$100,000 to said Town/Village, up to \$1,000,000.

Executive & Finance Committee

I HEREBY CERTIFY

RESOLUTION # 02-01-2022

WAS ADOPTED ON 11012

BY JACKSON COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

CINDY ALTMAN, JACKSON COUNTY CLERK

YES 18 NO 0

March 9, 2022

Steffany Powell Coker, Secretary to the Commission North Tower, 6th Floor 4822 Madison Yards Way Madison, WI 53705

Subject: Letter of Support for the Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Grant.

Ms. Powell Coker,

On behalf of the Town of Curran, I am writing in support of the proposed **Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Grant** in collaboration with Tri-County Communications. The successful operation of the Town of Northfield, residents and businesses, depends on reliable and cost-effective internet service.

- If this project is made possible, the Town of Curran taxpayers will all benefit from a healthier and more sustainable community. This will be done in various ways including but not limited to; telehealth services, education acceleration, business efficiencies, work-from-home options, and attracting new residents and businesses. This will truly provide digital equity, which is greatly needed at the Town of Curran.
- Through the survey that the town sent to all taxpayers we received 83 surveys back of which 81% of the people responded that they approve of the town board spending money on this expansion project. Most of the people who sent surveys back, live and/or own land in the project area. We have received letters of support form nearly 30 individuals and businesses. 38 people responded that they are willing to contribute financially local match toward this project. To date, we have received pledges for \$3,525 from individual taxpayers, another \$14,575 from local businesses and \$11,271 from local school districts for a total of \$44,371 in local match.
- Some examples of who this will greatly impact: Students who have been left behind due to lack of internet connectivity, 5 educators/teachers with their curriculum planning and classes dependent on internet, over 20 small businesses supported by home office, Registered Nurses taking continuing education courses from home and option to work from home with tele-health, Greenhouse family-business which will be able to better serve their customers through faster download and upload speeds with payment devices, veterans and elderly with health needs that can be met with tele-health, Fire & EMS personnel communicating with their fellow volunteers, farmers competing at the global market with technology supported by high-speed wi-fi, election poll-workers who rely on internet for state training, town government officials and employees communicating and further educating themselves to serve their constituents the best they can and lastly future generations.

Without quality internet services, we are not keeping up with the world around us. Please give your full consideration to this important project being proposed for our area of Jackson County. If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to reach me at 608-214-1129 or email mattkarls88@gmail.com Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Matthew of Karls

Matthew J. Karls, Chairman - Town of Curran

Town of Northfield

Jackson County

N10752 School House Ave. Hixton, WI 54635

Phone: 715-984-2332 Fax: 715-984-2527

March 4, 2022

Steffany Powell Coker, Secretary of the Commission North Tower, 6th Floor 4822 Madison Yards Way Madison, WI 53705

Subject: Letter of Support for the Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Grant

Ms. Powell Coker,

On behalf of the Town of Northfield, I am writing in support of the proposed **Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Grant** in collaboration with Tri-County Communications. The successful operation of the Town of Northfield, residents and businesses, depends on reliable and cost-effective internet service. Completing this portion of Northfield will ensure that residents in the entire Town will have digital equity and access to speeds that are needed for success in business, education, and tele-health care.

The majority of residents prefer plowed in cable over the satellite system.

The Town of Northfield is willing to provide matching funds up to \$54,200.00 if the grant is funded. The funds would come from ARPA funds.

Without quality internet services, we are not keeping up with the world around us. Please give you full consideration to this important project being proposed for our area in Jackson County.

If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to reach me at 715-984-2473.

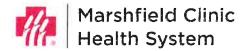
I am highly in support of the **Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Project** and commit to a cash match of \$100.00 if this project is funded.

Respectfully,

Richard A. Erickson, Chairman

Kichard A. Erichson

Town of Northfield



Marshfield Medical Center 1000 North Oak Avenue Marshfield, WI 54449

March 1, 2022

Ms. Kristy Nieto, Division Administrator Public Service Commission of Wisconsin 4822 Madison Yards Way Madison, WI 53707-9100

Re: Letter of Support/Commitment for the Town of Curran Broadband Expansion Grant proposal

Marshfield Clinic is an integrated health system located in Marshfield, WI serving central, north-central and north-western Wisconsin, this includes patients who reside in Jackson County. We are a Mission, Vision and Value's driven organization that strives to "Enrich the Lives of those we serve". MCHS has used Telehealth to reach unserved and underserved populations throughout Wisconsin since 1997.

MCHS is supportive of the efforts of this proposed project by the Town of Curran, in partnership with Tri-County Communications, and offer this letter of support and commitment for their grant application. Further, Marshfield Clinic Health System will contribute \$10,000 to the Town of Curran toward this project if it is awarded grant funds by the Public Service Commission. This project addresses a significant area of broadband deficiency in our service area and will bring fiber optic internet services to 140 locations in the Town of Curran.

Over the course of the last 6 years, MCHS has worked closely with the communities we serve in an effort to help them prepare for a time in which more healthcare can be delivered using technology directly into the patient's home. The COVID-19 Pandemic accelerated the move to delivering care via telehealth much more quickly than expected. However, Telehealth was able to respond quickly and offer continued access to healthcare services by our patients throughout the Pandemic. Since March of 2020, MCHS has completed over 400,000 telehealth encounters that were not permissible prior to the Pandemic. Despite the rapid advancement of Telehealth, access to broadband internet services continue to be our patient's top barrier in accessing these services.

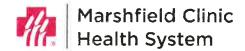
Looking forward to a Post-COVID world, Telehealth is not going away. Federal legislation is expected to make these new flexibilities to use telehealth permanent. Telehealth visits allow patients better access to healthcare without the need to travel or miss work or school. This allows patients to more conveniently maintain their chronic illness appointments, have a visit with their Primary Care Doctor or complete needed follow-up care. A number of new services are likely to join the array of telehealth services already offered by health systems across the country. A patient's access to broadband at home will be a determining factor in which services they can consume and which they cannot. MCHS will be at the forefront of offering these new care modalities.

Collaborative efforts are needed to expand broadband across Wisconsin and MCHS is proud to support this Broadband expansion project and we urge the Public Service Commission to fund this project.

Sincerely,

Susan Turney MD, MS, FACP, FACMPE

CEO



Marshfield Medical Center 1000 North Oak Avenue Marshfield, WI 54449

March 1, 2022

Ms. Kristy Nieto, Division Administrator Public Service Commission of Wisconsin 4822 Madison Yards Way Madison, WI 53707-9100

Re: Letter of Support/Commitment for the Town of Northfield Broadband Expansion Grant proposal

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MCHS is supportive of the efforts of this proposed project by the Town of Northfield, in partnership with Tri-County Communications, and offer this letter of support and commitment for their grant application. Further, Marshfield Clinic Health System will contribute \$10,000 to the Town of Northfield toward this project if it is awarded grant funds by the Public Service Commission. This project will expand about 6 miles of fiber optic cable to complete the Town's effort to cover every home and business in Northfield with Fiber Optic internet service.

Over the course of the last 6 years, MCHS has worked closely with the communities we serve in an effort to help them prepare for a time in which more healthcare can be delivered using technology directly into the patient's home. The COVID-19 Pandemic accelerated the move to delivering care via telehealth much more quickly than expected. However, Telehealth was able to respond quickly and offer continued access to healthcare services by our patients throughout the Pandemic. Since March of 2020, MCHS has completed over 400,000 telehealth encounters that were not permissible prior to the Pandemic. Despite the rapid advancement of Telehealth, access to broadband internet services continue to be our patient's top barrier in accessing these services.

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Collaborative efforts are needed to expand broadband across Wisconsin and MCHS is proud to support this Broadband expansion project and we urge the Public Service Commission to fund this project.

Sincerely,

Susan Turney MD, MS, FACP, FACMPE

CEO



Blair-Taylor School District

N31024 Elland Road • P.O. Box 107 • Blair, WI 54616 • www.btsd.k12.wi.us

BLAIR-TAYLOR ADMINISTRATION

Jeffrey S. Eide Superintendent 608.989.2881 Fax: 608.989.2451

Dana T. Eide 7-12 Principal 608.989.2525 Fax: 608.989.2451 **Lynn Halverson** *K-6 Principal* 608.989.9835 Fax: 608.989.2451

February 23, 2022

Steffany Powell Coker, Secretary to the Commission North Tower, 6th Floor 4822 Madison Yards Way Madison, WI 53705

Ms. Powell Coker;

I am writing in support of the proposed Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Grant.

Blair-Taylor covers about 190 square miles and a good portion of the Township of Curran resides in our school district. Blair-Taylor is a 6 month to 12th grade United Campus. We have approximately 630 students in our school district and we are approximately 47% with free and reduced students. Recently, through a referendum, the Blair-Taylor community supported additional classroom space, a baseball field, and a child care center to support students' and parents' needs.

During the pandemic, we needed to shift to learning from home or distance learning, and this was no small feat. Blair-Taylor purchased 90 hotspots to cover as much of our rural area as possible, and we purchased the equipment needed to allow every classroom to connect and communicate remotely; however, hotpots are only as good as the cellular reception available. In addition, we allowed parents to use the wifi in the parking lot when students were quarantined or if the school was not in session. There was also wifi outside of our local library unless the library was open. Although we did our best to support parents' wifi needs, our hills and valleys did not allow all parents in our rural area to stay connected.

Unless our staff lived in an area that had fiber optic or strong connectivity, we needed to support many of our teachers with their wifi needs. Once again, we used hot spots to accomplish this task. We were fortunate to be in person throughout the pandemic, but there were times when we had over 70 students out on quarantine and the challenges faced with supporting distance learning with some students learning from home and others in school was challenging to say the least.

My wife and I live in the country, and we have attempted to use satellite and hotspots, and I can personally say that these are not our best options for good connectivity. These items allowed us to connect, but they are not dependable and they are very expensive. You can only imagine the challenges faced by parents who are just trying to provide for their families. Teaching and learning are difficult

BOARD MEMBERS

Troy Tenneson, President

Jeffrey Stalheim, Director

Dr. Blaine O. Koxlien, Director

Perry Kujak, Vice-President

Sarah Staff, Treasurer

Michele Steien, Director

Dave Thompson, Clerk

enough; however, teaching and learning with poor connectivity exacerbate closing gaps and strengthening learning.

The Blair-Taylor School District is committed to supporting our rural area, and we are sincerely appreciative of how the Township of Curran is committed to supporting families and students who live in our rural school district. During our school board meeting on February 21, 2022, the school board committed \$6,271.00 to support the Township of Curran.

If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to reach me at 608-989-2881, ext 300, or eidej@btsd.k12.wi.us. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Jeffrey S. Eide

Blair-Taylor, Superintendent

H25 Ein



March 10, 2022

Steffany Powell Coker, Secretary to the Commission North Tower, 6th Floor 4822 Madison Yards Way Madison, WI 53705

Ms. Powell Coker;

I am writing in support of the proposed Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Grant.

The SDBRF proudly serves approximately 1,750 students from Black River Falls and other rural surrounding communities. Our District spans over 500 square miles, which includes many coulees and bluffs that add additional burden to connectivity. The Ho-Chunk Nation Tribal Offices are located just east of Black River Falls and many of our Ho-Chunk families live further out of town past the Nation's headquarters. We serve a diverse student population with 26% Native American, 16% of our students are identified as having a disability and require special education services, and nearly 60% of our students are from families that live below the poverty level.

I consider the SDBRF to be progressive when it comes to meaningful integration of technology to enhance the learning for our students. We have been a 1:1 district at the high school level for nearly ten years, at the middle school level for five years, and are very close to that ratio at the elementary level. We have consistently provided professional development for our staff to ensure they can maximize the benefits of the technology tools. While our students are in our school buildings, we have amazing teaching and learning happening!

When our school buildings were forced to close in the spring of 2020 we felt confident in our ability to continue to provide meaningful instruction through a combination of paper packets and through the use of technology. Families, students, and staff moved mountains and we finished the 2019-2020 school year with a sense of pride in the work that was accomplished!

In preparation for the 2020-2021 school year, we gave families a choice to either come face to face, or to attend virtually. While many districts had between 10-15% of their families choose virtual instruction, we started the year with 35% choosing to attend virtually. The data shows that Native Americans were more significantly impacted by COVID-19, and with many of our Ho-Chunk students living in multi-generational homes, families were simply not willing to risk physically sending their children to school.

We purchased over 200 hotspots to hand out to families that struggled with internet capability, however, the problem was often NOT the lack of funding for internet services, it was an inability to get reliable internet where they lived. Families with multiple children in the house, and parents trying to work from home, simply didn't have the connectivity to sustain all of that. Students were forced to "take turns" attending their virtual classes because only one video

stream would work at a time. While we invested thousands of dollars in hotspots to boost homes internet capability, these efforts didn't address many of our virtual families.

Our older students were often seen in the cars outside of the District Office so that they could connect to the District's Wi-Fi to both attend their classes and to download materials so that they were available when they got home. We offered internet cafés to students and families in the evenings. We provided tutors at the Ho-Chunk Community Center, as the groups were much smaller and that building had reliable internet.

During the forced closure in the spring of 2020, we had the added challenge of not all of our staff members having internet that was capable of live streaming lessons. We literally had teachers teaching from their cars in the parking lots of our schools.

The achievement gap that exists between our native and non-native students was exacerbated during the pandemic. Students and families were forced to choose between protecting the health of their families, and allowing their children to physically attend school. This is unacceptable. In the year 2021, we can do better.

This grant opportunity provides Jackson County with the possibility to overcome a significant hurdle in our rural area. It's unfortunate that it took a pandemic to bring this subject to light for so many, however, the positive results of this investment will far outlast the effects of COVID. Young families are extremely "connected" and if we want our rural communities to continue to thrive we are going to have to address the broadband issues.

The School District of Black River Falls is highly supportive of the Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Project and commits to a cash match of \$4,000 if this project is funded.

If you have any questions, or would like additional information, please feel free to reach me at 715-284-4357 or at severson@brf.org. Thank you for your consideration.

Your partner in education,

Dr. Shelly Severson Superintendent of Schools

Administrative Offices 301 North Fourth Street Black River Falls, WI 54615 (715) 284-4357

Dr. Shelly Severson - Superintendent An Equal Opportunity Employer



19121 Hobson Street, Whitehall, WI 54773 | P: 715.538.4364 | F: 715.538.4639 | whitehallsd.k12.wi.us

Mike Beighley - Superintendent

January 18, 2022

Steffany Powell Coker, Secretary to the Commission North Tower, 6th Floor 4822 Madison Yards Way Madison, WI 53705

Ms. Powell Coker,

As Superintendent of the Whitehall School District, I am writing in support of the proposed Town of Curran / Town of Northfield Broadband Access Grant in collaboration with Tri-County Communications. If funded, this project will improve speeds up to the federal standard of 100 Mbps of upload and download speeds, benefiting the children and residents of this school district for years to come.

Our rural school district includes all or part of 10 municipalities from both Tremealeau and Jackson counties. The total combined population is approximately 5004 residents, and there are approximately 780 students enrolled in our district, 4K-12. In 2012, we implemented a 1:1 computer initiative for students in grades 9-12 and added grades 2-8 in 2014, with the students in grades K-1 having devices available for each student in classrooms as needed. This was part of our programming prior to the pandemic as we have been a very aggressive district when it comes to technology integration for many years.

Our school district is considered to be high in poverty as 50% percent of our students receive free or reduced lunch services. Among our student body, 15% of our students have an identified disability in which they are receiving additional educational support. To add to the various needs, we have in our district, 10% of our student body is represented by Hispanic students, many of which require ELL support.

In the Spring of 2020, when the news broke that school districts throughout the state of Wisconsin would be moving to virtual instruction, we felt we were adequately prepared. Every student would leave school on Friday, March 13 with their 1 to 1 program device in hand and a plan in place as to how we would be able to meet each one of their needs. We quickly learned that was not the case as limited access to high quality internet services was simply not an option for too many of our students and, at times, staff.

After about 2 weeks of social emotional support and academic review, we quickly became aware of some of the struggles and issues families were experiencing in attempting to access the content for their children at home. We quickly formulated a plan to secure additional hotspots that could be placed in these homes to help provide them a better virtual learning environment. Throughout this process, we quickly learned that the geographical location of each family would be impacted based on the internet or cellular provider they relied on. It took us a few weeks to determine which hotspots from the various cellular companies would work at each individual location. Once that was established, we continued to experience numerous issues with families having multiple students trying to access the internet. Some of these households were forced to have their children log in to their classrooms at various times throughout the day so that they could receive adequate internet speeds.

A few of these issues were alleviated after contacting and meeting with TCC, a local cooperative. Where they were able to, they offered to provide internet services to families who were in their service area, but were not customers of their cooperative. While this did not solve all of our access issues for families, it certainly helped alleviate some. It was from this point where conversations began with TCC as to how internet access could be expanded for district families.

As we transitioned to the start of the school year in the fall of 2020, we had approximately 10% of our families who chose to have their children remain at home and receive virtual instruction. Of these 75 students, the vast majority had limited internet access and were unable to consistently stream their lessons or attend classes virtually. We again needed to rely on hotspots for these families, but again, finding a hotspot that was effective in the outlying areas of our district proved to be very difficult.

Our school district takes great pride in continually doing whatever it takes to meet the needs of every student in our district. With that being said, teachers were required to become creative as to how they could deliver their instruction for those students who were learning virtually. This often resulted in staff preparing and delivering materials to the student's home or calling them daily during their prep times to ensure that adequate learning was taking place.

I am highly in support of the Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Project and the Whitehall School District commits to a cash match of \$5,000 if this project is funded. It is our goal to partner with our local agencies so that we can one day provide high-speed broadband services to the unserved and underserved areas found throughout our district. We believe these partnerships will lead to the development of a robust broadband network that meets the needs of the Town of Curran and Town of Northfield, its residents, and the school district.

If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to reach me at 715-538-4374 Ext 107 or at beighleym@whitehallsd.k12.wi.us. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Mike Beighley Superintendent



3/3/22

Steffany Powell Coker, Secretary to the Commission North Tower, 6th Floor 4822 Madison Yards Way Madison, WI 53705

Ms. Powell Coker,

I am writing in support of the proposed Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Grant.

As a local business in the Curran Township that is also a high-capacity production facility, we understand the absolute need of a strong infrastructure within the township and its valuable role not only to us, but to our employees, and community.

Having fast, reliable, and affordable internet service in rural areas of Jackson County is directly related to business vitality. Our current facility has been in operation since 2015 and as a result, had to upgrade the broadband service to our site. Without it, we simply would not be able to conduct our operation in the Township and would need to relocate to conduct our operations.

Since the inception of our mine and rail operation, we have seen the landscape for our business change drastically, whether in terms of our service or for those in the community we are partnered with. The COVID pandemic present many challenges to our employees. Some were required to work from home and others in the workforce had to alter schedules to accommodate childcare and personal changes a result. Many of our staff have shared their trials and tribulations of those environments and without a strong and reliable service at their own home, both work and personal lives of our employees were negatively impacted.

Furthermore, the country's infrastructure changes every day. Things like education, general employment, banking, and health and human services are now converting to solely being served by an online basis. As an employer, we see many of those in our workforce and in our vendors being forced into those requirements as the workplace evolves around them, whether they are ready or not. As mentioned, we know how costly it is as a business to obtain necessary broadband service when it is not normally provided. I am confident that a typical middle-class Wisconsin family would never be able to afford an upgrade to their service out of their own pocket; as well as other smaller, rural businesses.

Broadband expansion is not only a critical part of our daily lives, but has also, transformed into a requirement. I think of how much has changed in the last seven years to our operation and how different the world will be when we operate another seven more. Broadband infrastructure is an opportunity for a township and their local businesses. Without reasonable and affordable access to it, it can quickly delve into a detriment if allowed. But in today's high-speed world, broadband expansion should be looked upon as a necessity that is only meant to enhance lives of those throughout our communities.

As a result, AMI Silica has pledged a donation of \$10,000.00 to the Curran Township in support of this expansion. We value our relationship with the Township and those in it and we hope others will understand the importance of the expansion's role in the community

If you would like to further discuss, please feel free to reach me at (331) 223-1570 or by email, nate.kitzrow@amisilica.com.

Respectfully,

Nate Kitzrow

Óperations Manager

AMI Silica LLC



March 7, 2022

Steffany Powell Coker, Secretary to the Commission North Tower, 6th Floor 4822 Madison Yards Way Madison, WI 53705

Ms. Powell Coker:

On behalf of Smart Sand, Inc., I am writing in support of the proposed Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Grant.

Smart Sand, Inc. is a business and landowner with real estate permitted for an industrial sand mine located in the Town of Curran. Although our facility is not operational, we recognize that having fast, dependable, and affordable internet service is essential to business vitality. As our business evaluates the potential for future development of our site, broadband service would make a positive contribution to the success of our business as well as contribute to the quality of life in the community supporting the relocation and retention of current and future employees.

Smart Sand, Inc. is in support of the Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Project and will commit to a cash match of \$2,000 if this project is funded.

If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to reach me at (608) 371-1540 or at glusty@smartsand.com. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Grey Lusty

Vice President of Mining Operations



BADGER MINING CORPORATION

409 SOUTH CHURCH STREET, BERLIN, WI 54923 (920) 361-2388 • FAX (920) 361-2826 www.badgerminingcorp.com

March 10, 2022

Steffany Powell Coker, Secretary to the Commission North Tower, 6th Floor 4822 Madison Yards Way Madison, WI 53705

Ms. Powell Coker,

I am writing in support of the proposed Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Grant.

Badger Mining Corporation (BMC) is a family-owned company that is committed to producing high quality products, operating our facilities in an environmentally responsible manner and ensuring the health and wellness of our associates and of the communities in which we operate. The sand products produced by BMC are used in a variety of industrial and environmental applications. Markets we serve include oil and gas production (hydraulic fracturing), metalcasting, construction, recreation, filter media, glass and agriculture among others.

BMC Corporate office is located in Berlin, WI. Our three mine and sand processing facilities are located in Fairwater and Taylor, WI and Kermit, TX; and our three coating facilities are located in Taylor and Merrillan, WI. Additionally, BMC has a large distribution network of transloading facilities throughout the Americas through sub-contractors.

BMC has invested significantly in ensuring our business has reliable internet to support our business in rural Taylor, WI. Although, our business has adequate internet service, we also see the importance and value for our associates to have the same at their homes. Being in business in Taylor for 43 years, we have seen the need for reliable and affordable internet service for the ability to work from home with certain jobs and as more automation becomes available for our industry, being able to log-in remotely. Everyone strives to ensure their business runs efficiently and if working remotely is an option, we want to ensure are associate are able to be just as effective being at home or in the office.

 Badger Mining Corporation supports the Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Project and commits to a \$1,000.00 pledge.

If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to reach me at 920-361-2388 ext. 1181 or at thuggins@badgerminingcorp.com. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully.

Todd Huggins
Public Relations



3/1/2022

Ms. Steffany Powell Coker, Secretary to the Commission Public Service Commission of Wisconsin North Tower, 6th Floor 4822 Madison Yards Way Madison, WI 53705-9100

Subject: Letter of Support for the Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Grant

Ms. Coker,

I am writing in support of the proposed Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Grant.

The physical and mental health of any community is incredibly important and can be greatly increased with improved internet service. First, through the internet, patients are able to have a greater access to their:

- Health information
- Convenience in gaining the health supplies
- Access to virtual video visits through telehealth
- Ability to Request appointments
- Ability to Request Medication refills and renewals
- Ability to securely message their providers

Second, healthcare does not strictly reside in the brick and mortar of a hospital or clinic. We have dedicated clinicians that travel to patient's homes that require post-hospital, palliative, and Hospice care. These clinicians need higher speed broadband to be effective and efficient to deliver the excellent care our patients deserve.

Third, our health system places a high-priority on reaching community members through multiple means, including social media. Through social media we are able to share group event information, share healthy lifestyle tips, and much more.

If the Towns of Curran and Northfield receive this grant, Black River Memorial Hospital pledges to assists with funds up to \$1,000 to help support this initiative.

White pools

If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to reach me at 715-284-1301 or at White/acobsM@brmh.net. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully.

Mary Beth White-Jacobs President and CEO

Black River Memorial Hospital



Jensen Towing & Repair

March 4, 2022

Steffany Powell Coker, Secretary to the Commission North Tower, 6th Floor 4822 Madison Yards Way Madison, WI 53705

Ms. Powell Coker,

I am writing in support of the proposed Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Grant. Business success and growth is dependent on reliable, and affordable internet service, as it allows us to complete nearly all aspects of operations.

Jensen Towing & Repair has been in business since 2006 serving the Hixton and greater Jackson County area. I have recently re-invested into our business adding a new repair shop to better serve our customers. I employ 3 full-time people and look to support our local community in various ways.

I live in the Town of Curran on State Road 95 and lack the availability of high-speed internet at home. If this project is awarded, I will be enabled to support my business from home which will lead to more efficiencies. Although I no longer have children at home, I realize that this project will help other families in the community by having reliable, affordable high-speed internet available to them to develop their children into productive contributors of Jackson County and surrounding areas in years to come.

I am highly in support of the Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Project and will commit \$300 cash match if this project is funded.

For these reasons, it is critical that our area of Jackson County upgrades to true broadband service. If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to reach me at (715) 299-1730 or at rd.iensen54635@gmail.com. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully.

Rick Bunnell

Owner, Jensen Towing & Repair

Town of Curran Resident

Home address: W14618 State Road 95, Hixton, WI 54635



221 Main Street Black River Falls, WI 54615 Phone: (715) 284-9448 Fax: (715) 284-7153

401 N. Washington St., P.O. Box 68 Melrose, WI 54642 Phone: (608) 488-2411 Fax: (608) 488-2308

www.brcbank.com

March 9, 2022

Steffany Powell Coker, Secretary to the Commission Public Service Commission 4822 Madison Yards Way North Tower, 6th floor Madison, WI 53705

Subject: Letter of Support for the Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Grant

Ms. Powell Coker,

I am writing in support of the proposed Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Grant. Business success, growth, and vitality in our area are highly dependent on reliable, and affordable internet service, as it allows us to complete nearly all aspects of our operations. Importantly, success of our operations is directly linked to critical information access to the homes of our customers in the communities we serve.

Black River Country Bank has been a cornerstone in our community since we started as the Bank of Melrose back in 1907. While much has changed in 115 years of business ... our integrity, safety & soundness, community commitment, inclusion of others, and customer-centered approach has never wavered. We are locally owned family business who employs 25 people, with a 7-member, local Board of Directors who provide oversight; all who have owned/operated their own local businesses. Our community bank consists of two physical offices in Black River Falls and Melrose, as well as remote staff across Jackson County. We offer an extensive range of lending (agricultural, commercial, small business, residential mortgage, and consumer loans) and deposit (personal and business checking, savings, CDs, IRAs, HSAs, and more) services, as well as *essential* convenience services for our customers (and employees) such as online banking, mobile banking, debit cards and apps, eSign, online bill pay, e-Statements, 24-hour ATM service, and very soon ... deposit account opening and funding, all online.

Almost every single aspect of our business operation is dependent on swift, secure, dependable online access. Whether it be using our internal systems to perform transactions and make loans for our customers, opening accounts, providing real-time account information and balances, connecting to our core server for daily transactions submissions and system upgrades, fraud detection, mitigation, & prevention, internal document sharing and communications, external customer and vendor communications and service, performing important market analyses, managing social media, as well as conducting research and development.

Our website at www.brcbank.com is our essential and primary means of communicating and connecting with our mass audience. It is of utmost importance for business continuity and growth. Our internet-based platform provides our business and consumer customers individualized access to their online banking accounts and loans (directly from our homepage) where they can perform account inquiry and transactions such as transfers, loans payments, bill payments, and review of their e-Statements for account balancing. The site also includes a full array of marketing resources and communications. For example, a listing and description of our deposit and lending products and services for customers to learn and choose from, as well as contact persons, and online forms for Getting Started on account and loan opening. Plus, soon we will provide customers an opportunity to complete the full deposit account opening process and funding, all online (all in roughly 3 minutes with proper internet access and speed). Our website provides important alerts, important instructions and tutorials, job openings and



221 Main Street Black River Falls, WI 54615 Phone: (715) 284-9448 Fax: (715) 284-7153 401 N. Washington St., P.O. Box 68 Melrose, WI 54642 Phone: (608) 488-2411 Fax: (608) 488-2308

www.brcbank.com

applications, advertising, promotions, community events, an outlet for communicating issues via Contact Us, Stop Payments, reporting lost or stolen cards, etc. The pandemic exacerbated our customers' and employees' needs and use for these essential online tools. Adoption and conversion rates with our online systems have skyrocketed, especially between March 2020 and March 2021. What was once a perceived "luxury" became a normal and essential way of doing business and competing with the larger world. If we didn't have the digital tools in place for our customers, our turnover risk was significantly increased.

Employee's working remotely are also presented with challenges when internet connections are unreliable, slow, intermittent, or simply don't work. When internet is good, productivity and morale is high, work routines and communications can be conducted in a regular fashion. With poor internet service, working from home is difficult to do, as employees are not able to effectively communicate with one another via web conferences or emails, and they are not able to easily access information necessary to complete their work or connect with their co-workers. Frustrations can run high, thus a loss in productivity and decreased morale, and ultimately could affect employee satisfaction, job performance, and retention. This doesn't even touch on the issue of remote/virtual schooling, especially when that was at its peak (and has continued off and on across the various school districts in our county; as well as during inclement weather school cancellations) and its affects on our employees' families and community. One sentence cannot do justice for the critical need in our area, especially with such a high percentage of low-access, low-income families, many residing in rural Jackson County.

Employee recruitment & retention in a post-pandemic world means immediate, effective communication, and high-touch access to people, information, and applications. Recruitment, screening, interviews are regularly conducted online ... Zoom and Microsoft Teams are our "go-to" online tools. High speed, stable connections are essential to effective recruiting whether local or for potential employees looking to relocate. As our business continues to recruit new employees, residential broadband service is a "non-negotiable" in attracting qualified employees, in our area and beyond.

The above are only a few examples of why it is critical that our area of Jackson County expands its fiber infrastructure, reach the fiber into our homes, at a higher rate and speed to keep up with the rest of the country. This project will enable critical activities such as remote work, remote schooling when necessary, access to healthcare, and local business operations to continue seamlessly. All essential for a thriving community.

I am highly in support of the Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Project and commit to a cash match of \$200 if this project is funded.

If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to reach me at 715-284-9448 or at becker@brcbank.com. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Bob Becker

Bob Becker

President

Black River Country Bank

CC: Town of Curran Clerk/Board



March 9, 2022

Steffany Powell Coker, Secretary to the Commission North Tower, 6th Floor 4822 Madison Yards Way Madison, WI 53705

Ms. Powell Coker,

I am writing in support of the proposed Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Grant. Business success and growth is dependent on reliable, and affordable internet service.

Security Financial Bank is a community bank providing deposit and loan services for individuals and businesses within the Jackson County market and specifically in the Curran/Northfield location. We have 2 locations in Jackson County which are Black River Falls and Alma Center within Jackson County. We currently have 27 employees between these 2 locations.

A vast majority of our customer base is now enrolled with online banking, and it is imperative we have strong/fast/ reliable internet service available to our customers. Remote deposit is also receiving a greater usage and will continue to grow for our customers.

Digitally, we share important documents and data with staff and customers, communicate with our vendors and make purchases, track our products as they are being shipped, and many more activities.

Nearly 50% of our workforce were required to work remotely during the Covid pandemic. At multiple times, lack of broadband internet service reduced the productivity of our staff and affected the service we could provide to our customers.

A fast and reliable internet service for Curran/Northfield and Jackson County will continue to support a strong growth in our local economy. This service will allow our customers to compete on a national and international level that may not be available currently.

I am highly in support of the Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Project and commit to a cash match of \$200 if this project is funded.

For these reasons, it is critical that our area of Jackson County upgrades to true broadband service. If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to reach me at 715-670-0734 or at djohnson@sfbank.com. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully

buane K. Johnson / Market President & Relationship Manager

Security Financial Bank



March 9, 2022

Ms. Steffany Powell Coker, Secretary to the Commission North Tower, 6th Floor Hill Farms State Office Building 4822 Madison Yards Way Madison, WI 53705

Subject: Letter of Support for the Town of Curran Project

Ms. Powell Coker,

On behalf of our members and our employees, I am writing in support of the proposed Town of Curran Broadband Project. Business success and growth is dependent on reliable, affordable internet service because it affects nearly all our operations. As a cooperative, our business success, in turn, impacts our nearly 21,000 members, our 100 employees, their families, and all those who live and work in our 10-county field of membership, including Jackson County.

Co-op Credit Union is a full-service financial cooperative with headquarters and three branches in Jackson County. We also have branches in three other neighboring counties, which all face similar broadband needs. It is critical that our members, employees and community members have sufficient internet access to live and conduct business in an increasingly digital world.

Notably, a majority of our members rely on our online banking application to track their balances, make payments and transfers, and pay their bills. We also regularly communicate with our members through digital platforms and channels: We send and receive signed documents, provide electronic statements and utilize a phone system that relies on internet connection.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, this digital business model became vital when we closed our lobbies to walk-in traffic. Digital access was key to ensuring continuity of business operations and our members' ability to conduct their financial business, including meeting with our staff through virtual platforms. Additionally, employee training and regular meetings transitioned to virtual channels, and we began offering community educational sessions through digital means. Many employees, who live in Jackson County, struggled with internet connectivity due to the lack of adequate internet service and speed.

We cannot stress enough how critical reliable, affordable internet connectivity is for our rural communities and their continued success and growth. Our residents and businesses rely on it to keep us safe, facilitate learning, and preserve natural resources. For these reasons, it is critical that Jackson County upgrades to true broadband service. Co-op Credit Union is committed to providing \$200 of matching funds should this grant be awarded.

If you have any questions or would like additional information, please reach out to me at 800-258-0023 or at echrisinger@coopcu.com. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Eric L. Chrisinger

Co-op Credit Union President/CEO



ASPHALT SURFACING SINCE 1926

P.O. Box 340 Lake Delton, WI 53940 Ph. 608.254.2555 FAX 608.254.2249

Complete Asphalt Maintenance and Construction WWW.SCOTTCONSTRUCT.COM

March 9, 2022

Steffany Powell Coker, Secretary to the Commission North Tower, 6th Floor 4822 Madison Yards Way Madison, WI 53705

Ms. Powell Coker,

I am writing in support of the proposed Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Grant.

Having fast, reliable, and affordable internet service in rural areas of Jackson County is directly related to business vitality.

I am highly in support of the Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Project and commit to a cash match of \$100 if this project is funded.

If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to reach me at (608) 844-0424 or at jdittmar@scottconstruct.com. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Jack Dittmar

Regional Manager

Scott Construction, Inc.

8182 Apple Road Pittsville, WI 54466 February 7, 2022

Steffany Powell Coker, Secretary to the Commission Public Service Commission 4822 Madison Yards Way North Tower, 6th floor Madison, WI 53705

Ms. Powell Coker,

I am writing in support of the proposed Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Grant.

This project is vitally important for residents of Curran and Northfield, but also important for seasonal property owners. In my case, my family owns recreational property in Jackson County that has been in the family for over 100 years.

As 3rd generation family members approach retirement, we want to spend more time on the property, and some may even consider building a year-round residence, thereby increasing the tax base.

As 4th generation family members complete college and begin their work careers, it's apparent that many would be interested in extending their stay from a long weekend to a full week if they could work remotely. Both situations translate into greater economic impact for local businesses. I'm sure we are not the only family that this applies to.

I am highly in support of the Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Project and commit to a cash match of \$100 if this project is funded.

If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to reach me at 715-340-0503 or marrannlippert@outlook.com . Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Mary Ann Lippert

Ms. Powell Coker,

I am writing in support of the proposed **Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Grant.** Modern life is dependent on fast, reliable, and affordable internet service. As a resident of rural Jackson County, I expect digital equity with those living in larger communities.

I currently have DISH internet. One, I live on a fixed income and its expensive and two, when the weather is bad it doesn't work.

We need quality internet services to keep up with the world around us.

I support the Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Project and commit to a cash match of \$500 if this project is funded.

I am highly in support of the **Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Project.** If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to reach me at sleepings.com.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely yours,

Genell L Severson N9647 Tyler Road Hixton, WI 54635

22 February 2022

Steffany Powell Coker, Secretary to the Commission Public Service Commission 4822 Madison Yards Way North Tower, 6th floor Madison, WI 53705

Ms. Powell Coker,

I am writing in support of the proposed **Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Grant.** Our internet speed is frustratingly slow - often times to the point of being unusable for downloads. In the past my wife had a home business that required international (Peru) communications/transmissions that were extremely difficult because of our internet speed. As a professional pilot it was very important that I have accurate and timely weather and radar information that could have been greatly improved with faster internet. Now as I enter into the autumn of my life, I find myself increasingly in need of medical communication through the Veterans Administration online services..

We feel that we deserve the same internet service as urban areas without having to give up the country lifestyle our family has enjoyed for the last 105 years.

We would be willing to support the Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Project and commit a cash match of \$500 if the projected is funded.

I am highly in support of the **Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Project.** If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to reach me at 715 963-4354 or ajjacobson@centurytel.net. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Allen Jacobson N8298 S Adams Rd. Hixton, WI 54635

Ms. Powell Coker,

I am writing in support of the proposed **Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Grant.** Modern life is dependent on fast, reliable, and affordable internet service. As a resident of rural Jackson County, I expect digital equity with those living in larger communities.

- With our growing family fast internet is becoming more of a necessity. Our current internet only allows for one person to effectively use the internet without lag or extended load times. There are currently three people relying on the internet to further their education and/or do homework for school. In fact last year when schools were closed and our oldest was doing virtual learning from home in order to have internet fast enough to support classes we needed to run his laptop off of a cellphone hotspot. For education the low internet speeds can make online learning a challenge and when the younger kids need to start using it for school work it will only get worse. As time goes by not only will more people in our house rely on the internet but the amount of data each person uses will also increase which will make slow internet even more of a problem in the future.
- Internet usage for education is probably the most important use for the internet but there is also a
 need for higher speeds to support family entertainment. Our current internet is just fast enough to
 stream TV or videos in good quality on one device, if others use the internet video quality is
 negatively affected.
- In the past we were making money from YouTube by uploading videos and getting paid for the advertisements included in the videos. Our current internet upload speed is extremely poor and makes uploading videos to YouTube a challenge. On our current speed it is not even possible to upload all content because if an upload doesn't complete within about 20 hours the upload will fail. It makes it hard to make money on the internet when your speeds don't allow you to upload all the content. In fact a member of our household had to take their computer to their employer (who has fiber optic provided by TCC) and use internet at the location to upload a few videos that were not possible to upload at home on our personal internet due to slow speeds.
- With our current internet speeds changing jobs within our current careers is impossible. If we had
 faster internet speeds we could work from home in a different job role but currently that is not an
 option. Therefore our current internet speeds are negatively impacting our personal career
 development.
- Higher speed internet would bring our family the option to use telehealth services, currently we do
 not have that option as the likelihood of being disconnected mid visit is very likely. In fact one of us
 is a healthcare provider and could be employed in telehealth services if our internet speeds
 supported it.

• I am highly in support of the Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Project and commit to a cash match of \$300 if this project is funded.

I am highly in support of the **Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Project.** If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to reach us by phone at 715-299-2531 or email jsedelbauer@outlook.com. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Jonathan and Janessa Sedelbauer N7856 Miller Rd. Hixton, WI 54635

Greta J. Gearing

W15152 Green Acres Road Taylor, WI 54659 GJG8866@gmail.com 715-299-8866

March 9, 2022

Steffany Powell Coker, Secretary to the Commission Public Service Commission 4822 Madison Yards Way North Tower, 6th floor Madison, WI 53705

Ms. Powell Coker,

I am writing in support of the proposed Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Grant. It is exciting to hear that the Township, County along with area School Districts, Business owners and others are working hard to get this accomplished. Thank you for the efforts to help those in the rural areas get digital equity to those living in larger communities!

I have just started working from home full time now and the internet is a huge concern for me. I had the opportunity to work from home for the past two years with my current employer, but I have always went into work because my internet is limited and at times not the best. As of late, changes with my company have made it necessary that I work full time at home. I tried to go with Bug Tussel as they have a tower near Taylor. But I was not able to sign on with them as there is a "hill in my way" and I need to be within sight of the tower. I signed up with Starlink, however I am told that "Starlink is currently at capacity in my area, so my order may not be fulfilled until 2023 or later."

As well as working from home for my full time job, I also have started a small side business from home and having high speed internet would be very helpful because I will be using the internet to sell and market my products. Not to mention that I volunteer as a Secretary/Treasurer for the Hixton Rod & Gun Club which requires internet. I also use the internet to create the newsletters for my church. Almost everything I do relates to having good internet speeds. As I was writing this letter, I tested my speeds and it tested "moderate." Currently I have US Cellular for internet and it is costly and as I said, moderate at best.

Another option that I would use high speed internet for is to stream TV. I have antenna TV at this time and it is *very* limited to available stations I can receive and is not very good quality selection of shows to watch. I used to have Direct TV and Dish Network, but the prices for that service is very expensive and I had to cut that out of my budget. With high speed internet, I would be able to stream better quality shows.

With having high speed internet available, I would definitely sign up for it! I highly support the Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Project and commit to a cash match of \$200 if this project is funded. If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to reach me at 715-299-8866 or GJG8866@gmail.com. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Ante Accing Greta Gearing

Rural Hixton/Taylor area

Ms. Powell Coker,

I am writing in support of the proposed **Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Grant.** Modern life is dependent on fast, reliable, and affordable internet service. As a resident of rural Jackson County, I expect digital equity with those living in larger communities.

We operate a small greenhouse in northeastern Curran Township. Like a business, we face the challenges of supply chain, inflation, energy, labor, etc. Unlike many however, we do not have equal access to high-speed internet. Today's world demands it. Many businesses require doing business online and via e-mail, and the usage of podcasts/streaming for education and information has only exploded during COVID and will continue. Many of our trade shows are only online now, and much of our purchasing is done that way. Solid internet connections are essential.

Currently we are served with 20mbs down and only 1.5 up. The upload speed is terrible. In today's climate, the need for offsite backups is essential, but painful if not skipped at that speed, and two way video is problematic at best.

Without quality internet services, we are not keeping up with the world around us. If this proposal from Tri-County Communications is funded, better access will improve our life and well-being. Communicating online is crucial for our community.

I am highly in support of the Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Project and commit to a cash match of \$200.00 if this project is funded. ****this is a pledge, funds would not be collected until when/if they grant is awarded later 2022.

I am highly in support of the **Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Project.** If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to reach me at 715-963-3909 or Gathje@centurytel.net. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Jim Gathje N9514 County Road FF Hixton, WI 54635 I am writing in support of the proposed Curran/Northfield Broadband expansion grant.

Date: 3-9-2022

We currently have an internet provider with speeds that are constantly inadequate. Our inability to use the internet for everything from ordering medicines to hardware and providing site security to our property is almost impossible. Our speed should be 1.1 to 1.25 mbps. This is when the internet is working, but the constant battle with the provider has not improved their service. We do not have any other choices, even satellite service is not available because of the terrain restrictions. During the process of writing this note, the speed test on my internet was .35mbps download and .32 mbps upload. It took 4 hours on the phone with the provider to get them to finally acknowledge an issue. We finally got the speed up to 1.25 mbps. This is a travesty and totally inadequate.

If the proposal from Tri-county communications is funded, better access is assured and quality of life will improve.

I am willing to help match up to \$200 to finance this project. I am also willing to discuss further funding based on timing and other needs.

In closing, I am very much in support of this project.

Thank you,

Tom Piecuch

P.O. Box 24

N8840 N Adams Rd

Hixton, WI. 54635

Ms. Powell Coker,

I am writing in support of the proposed **Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Grant**. Modern life is dependent on fast, reliable, and affordable internet service. As a resident of rural Jackson County, I expect digital equity with those living in larger communities.

Craig Jeske - Operations Manager - Work from home

Julie Jeske- Teacher (Art K-12) - Occasionally work from home virtually

Jeske Equestrian - Boarding & Training Lessons

Back 40 Outdoors campground – Start-up business

We as small business owners, teachers and work from home operations manager definitely support the Curran/Northfield Broadband Project. There are multiple times throughout the day when we cannot log into a simple meeting and/or zoom for teaching or work. Multiple times we have missed calls and reservations along with new boarding or training lessons due to poor connectivity in our area. This costs us customers and revenue. Please get the Broadband installed.

• I am highly in support of the Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Project and commit to a cash match of \$200.00 if this project is funded.

I am highly in support of the Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Project. If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to reach me at 715-928-3408 or craig.jeske@hotmail.com Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Craig and Julie Jeske W15236 Taylor Road, Taylor, WI 54659 (residence and equestrian business) & W15266 Taylor Road, Taylor, WI 54659 (campground)

Ms. Powell Coker,

I am writing in support of the proposed **Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Grant.** Modern life is dependent on fast, reliable, and affordable internet service. As a resident of rural Jackson County, I expect digital equity with those living in larger communities.

- Currently we are working off a hot spot on our phone. That's a challenge because if one of us leaves
 home with the phone, no one else can connect to the internet. It is not strong, so sometimes we
 can get things done on our computer, other times we can't. Our children don't like coming home
 and not having good internet to use.
- Not sure what our speeds are, but it is very slow
- We do not have a business from home, but just shopping on the internet is a challenge
- If our children were home now, doing online learning, they would give up
- We have not used telehealth services, but possibly in the future
- Without quality internet services, we are not able to just do everyday things on the internet. Even
 checking our emails. This is a drawback from living in the country, but I wouldn't trade it for
 anything. If this proposal from Tri-County Communications is funded, we would really enjoy using
 our computers, laptops and ipads
- I am highly in support of the Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Project and commit to a cash match of \$100.00 if this project is funded.

I am highly in support of the **Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Project.** If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to reach me at dlripp@gmail.com. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Dan & Lisa Ripp N7582 N Lincoln Rd Taylor, WI 54659

The Karls Family

March 4, 2022

Steffany Powell Coker, Secretary to the Commission North Tower, 6th Floor 4822 Madison Yards Way Madison, WI 53705

Ms. Powell Coker,

I am writing in support of the proposed Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Grant.

The Karls family utilizes internet services from Hughes Net satellite and Verizon cell phone hotspot. Often the consistency of service is dependent on the weather. In inclement weather the signal deteriorates; either slows the speed or makes the internet not usable. This form of internet is very expensive for what is needed monthly for data.

• We are on a 50 GB plan and often need to purchase more data, which ends up costing about \$200 per month. Our current speed is 20.5-36 Mbps download and 0.64-0.70 Mbps upload (depending on time of day and weather). 36 Mbps download may be ok for single users, but we often have 2+ devices using the internet at once which slows the speed down. We see the broadband internet through TCC as a reliable and affordable option for business and family.

I am an Independent Beauty Consultant with Mary Kay Cosmetics. Most of my business functions (training, team sales meetings, shipping labels, customer communications, and ordering) are done at home. I have goals to grow my business, and one roadblock has been the lack of broadband internet. Since the COVID-19 Pandemic, online facial parties and business meetings via Zoom have become the main tool for consultants to grow their business. However, in my household there is a greater demand for internet bandwidth than what is available. Often Zoom calls are negatively impacted by slow internet speeds, especially with other internet users competing for bandwidth.

- My husband, Matthew, works for a world-wide agriculture company as a territory manager servicing the Western Wisconsin area. His role is supported by an in-home office. Zoom calls and webinars have become a very regular tool for his company. Online training classes, seed ordering, research, data-systems website, and email are vital to his productivity.
- Matthew is also the Chairman for the Town of Curran and supports those
 responsibilities from the in-home office. He has found that many others in the township
 are being held back on their potential due to the inequity of internet access compared
 to other areas of the state.
- We have two young children who attend public elementary school. When e-learning is necessary they bring home devices from school to complete schoolwork. Our current satellite internet is not able to download all the content needed to adequately complete their homework assignments.

Having fast, reliable, and affordable internet service in The Town of Curran and Northfield will help this area for generations.

I am highly in support of the Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Project and commit to a cash match of \$150 if this project is funded.

If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to reach me at 608-214-9474 or at <a href="mailto:emmailt

Respectfully,

Emma Jo L. Karls Mary Kay Independent Beauty Consultant Homemaker W14993 Fall Coulee Rd. Hixton, WI 54635

Ms. Powell Coker,

I am writing in support of the proposed **Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Grant.**Modern life is dependent on fast, reliable, and affordable internet service. As a resident of rural Jackson County, I expect digital equity with those living in larger communities.

Our current speeds are 17 Mbps (download) and 1.3 Mbps (upload). I know these sound extremely slow but they were just upgraded this past summer from 10 Mbps (download) after I requested to get the fastest speed available at my address. Not much of an upgrade! The only reason I requested, though, is because a friend who works for CenturyLink told me that I should be able to get close to 80 Mbps based on my location. I am not sure why there is such a discrepancy in what I had been told.

We have two daughters attending college. When they were both forced to online learn from home for the Spring semester of 2020 due to COVID, virtual lectures took much longer because of the slow downloads, especially if they both had to be on at the same time. The lectures would run in bits and pieces making it difficult to concentrate and get the most out of them. The one daughter was able to return to somewhat campus life that Fall but the other is still studying from home today. Since it is only she at home during the day now, she does not experience the degree of difficulty with the internet but it is still not great.

In regards to us trying to access our email, entertainment or the internet in general, it takes a few minutes to initially come up. While watching movies, the audio often times will end up behind the video portion, so we have to pause the movie in order for the audio to catch up. Or, the other problem is that the audio stops frequently so you miss some of what was said. Not quite as enjoyable as it could be.

If this proposal from Tri-County Communications is funded, better access will improve our life and well-being. Communicating online is crucial for not only the present but even more imperative to the future growth of our community.

I am highly in support of the Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Project and commit to a cash match of \$75 if this project is funded.

If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to reach me at 715-299-1568 or itolhefty@centurylink.net. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Jeff Hefty W14621 E Adams Rd Hixton, WI 54635

Matt Rhodes Agency

March 9, 2022

Steffany Powell Coker, Secretary to the Commission North Tower, 6th Floor 4822 Madison Yards Way Madison, WI 53705

Ms. Powell Coker,

I am writing in support of the proposed Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Grant.

I own an Insurance and Wealth Management Agency in Black River Falls. I'm fortunate to have clients all over our great state and a great number of them are right here in the Jackson County area. I have one office in Jackson County with two employees.

Having fast, reliable, and affordable internet service in rural areas of Jackson County is directly related to business vitality.

I often times meet with clients either at their homes or businesses and having an internet connection is crucial for our meetings. It allows us to review policies as well as see up to the minute stock market positions.

I also know that families that live and work in these rural areas need adequate internet access not only for their jobs, but also for their children's schooling.

I am highly in support of the Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Project and commit to a cash match of \$75 if this project is funded.

If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to reach me at 715-284-2522 or at mrhodes@ruralins.com

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Matt Rhodes Agent Rural Mutual Insurance Farm Bureau Financial

Ms. Powell Coker,

I am writing in support of the proposed **Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Grant.** Modern life is dependent on fast, reliable, and affordable internet service. As a resident of rural Jackson County, I expect digital equity with those living in larger communities.

- As a special education teacher in the Blair-Taylor School District, I am constantly in need of internet services at home. For The past two years, I have had to sporadically teach virtually from my home. This has been difficult with a hot spot and the amount of time needed to fulfill my teaching duties. I had to increase my cellular bill to an unlimited plan in order to meet the needs of my family and job requirements. The other part of my job that requires internet services is to complete the paperwork required for special education services. I typically bring homework/paperwork to finish at home that requires the internet 2-3 days a week.
- One of the biggest challenges I currently face is not being able to stream services such as Netflix without 24/7 internet access. Streaming services take up minutes on my hotspot that I need to use for school or work purposes. Just recently, our cable provider increased their rate for services. We are now paying more for the same services. I would like to cancel our cable service and just use the internet and a streaming service such as Netflix. This would be a savings in my pocket. With the cost of everything increasing, every penny saved counts.
- I am highly in support of the Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Project and commit to a cash match of \$50 if this project is funded. This is a pledge, funds would not be collected until when/if they grant is awarded later 2022.

I am highly in support of the **Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Project.** If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to reach me at 715-299-4036 or at my email address: tslenczka@gmail.com
Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Cathie Slenczka N9586 County Road FF Hixton, WI 54635

Ms. Powell Coker,

I am writing in support of the proposed **Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Grant.** Modern life is dependent on fast, reliable, and affordable internet service. As a resident of rural Jackson County, I expect digital equity with those living in larger communities.

As a Registered Nurse and mother of a high school student, high speed internet is essential. I work from home with a blended schedule and utilize the internet for my work. When I initially moved into my current house, I purchased satellite internet. Speeds and capabilities with this form of service were not sufficient to allow for this work schedule. I was forced to look for other options or look for a new employer. I then purchased internet through my cell phone carrier. This service can be spotty and somewhat slow. Having a high school student further adds to the strain of my internet services. He often needs to complete homework assignments and even occasionally school itself utilizing the internet. Our current service then becomes very taxed and slow making it difficult for both him and I to use the internet at the same time. Funding this broadband program would help families like myself both personally and professionally as well as allow students to complete their education using a variety of learning modalities.

I am highly in support of the Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Project and commit to a cash match of \$50 if this project is funded. If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to reach me at 715-299-5496 or randiarneson@gmail.com. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Randi Arneson N9050 Pierce Rd. Hixton, WI 5635 MICHELLE SCHWENNEKER
N9526 Hagen Drive
Hixton, WI 54635
Town of Curran, Jackson County Wisconsin

March 7, 2022

Steffany Powell Coker, Secretary to the Commission Public Service Commission 4822 Madison Yards Way North Tower, 6th floor Madison, WI 53705

Ms. Powell Coker,

I am writing in support of the proposed **Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Grant.** Modern life is dependent on fast, reliable, and affordable internet service. As a resident of rural Jackson County, I expect digital equity with those living in larger communities.

I am currently the Clerk for the Town of Curran and have been self-employed as a business owner and subcontractor for paralegal services. In all these capacities, I have worked online from home first starting in 2008. FORTUNATELY, I am in a small sliver of our township that has fiber-optic high speed internet service provided by Tri-County Cooperative (TCC), who provides outstanding service. I believe I have benefited professionally and financially by having this service.

As the Town Clerk, I am responsible for training our election staff. In the "old days" which is not that long ago, I would have to send election inspectors to state approved election training. Now my election workers are of the generation that uses the "computer". As a result, I asked them to start using the Wisconsin Election Commission webinars to supplement their training. I was however very surprised when I was told they could not do webinars at home due to their slow internet service. This is when I first became aware that much of my township does not have high speed internet.

During the critical first two years of COVID, my husband and I were able to have zoom meetings with our doctors, friends, and support groups.

Due to the rural nature of where we live, many of us also have poor cellular phone signal. As such I have come to rely on my cellphones Wi-Fi calling feature.

I'm extremely pleased that the townships of Curran and Northfield have decided to partner with Tri-County Cooperative, they provide excellent service and could not have chosen better. I am very concerned that much of my township does not have the same advantage as I have had for many years. For this reason, we are willing to commit to a cash match of \$50 to help our neighbors if this project is funded.

If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to reach me at (715) 984-2538 or by email at schwenneker@tcc.coop.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Michelle Schwenneker Michelle Schwenneker February 23, 2022

Steffany Powell Coker, Secretary to the Commission Public Service Commission 4822 Madison Yards Way North Tower, 6th floor Madison, WI 53705

Ms. Powell Coker,

I am writing in support of the proposed Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Grant. Modern life is dependent on fast, reliable, and affordable internet service. As a resident of rural Jackson County, I expect digital equity with those living in larger communities.

Currently there is no high speed internet service available at our location. We live in a valley where satellite, cell tower, or phone line internet are either not available, or they are slow and unreliable. I would like to work from home but without fast, reliable internet, I must travel 5 days a week, 30+ miles per day.

Without quality internet services, we are not keeping up with the world around us. If this proposal from Tri-County Communications is funded, better access will improve our life and well-being. Communicating online is crucial for our community.

I am highly in support of the Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Project and commit to a cash match of at least \$50 if this project is funded.

I am highly in support of the Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Project. If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to reach me at 715-299-4029 or ddheusi@yahoo.com. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Diane Heusi

N9677 Tyler Road

Diane Heusi

Hixton, WI 54635

Steffany Powell Coker, Secretary to the Commission Public Service Commission 4822 Madison Yards Way North Tower, 6th floor Madison, WI 53705

Ms. Powell Coker,

I am writing in support of the proposed **Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Grant.** Modern life is dependent on fast, reliable, and affordable internet service. As a resident of rural Jackson County, I expect digital equity with those living in larger communities.

- Currently, our family has days we are working remotely and at the same time, the kids are home doing school remotely. This poses a huge challenge with speed and timing out due to all of us being online utilizing the internet simultaneously. This frustrates the kids as their work won't download, their video freezes, etc. In addition to the mentioned work/education necessities, if everyone in the house is using some type of downloadable entertainment or using wi-fi for entertainment purposes, the internet is too slow to support the activities, lowing the ability to enjoy and use the entertainment venues we pay for.
- Our current internet speed is 15/.5.
- Due to the pandemic, we had times where our healthcare appointments were conducted online in a
 web-based venue. We would completely lose signal, get kicked off and then have to try to log back
 on or have the screen randomly freeze. Due to this, there was loss of effective congruent
 communication which is so important with anything healthcare related.
- If this proposal from Tri-County Communications is funded, better access will improve our life and well-being. Communicating online is crucial for our community.
- I am highly in support of the Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Project and commit to a cash match of \$50 if this project is funded.

I am highly in support of the **Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Project**. If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to reach me at 715-299-3900 or dwestie74@gmail.com. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

David M. West W14629 E Adams Road Hixton, WI 54635 Steffany Powell Coker, Secretary to the Commission Public Service Commission 4822 Madison Yards Way North Tower, 6th floor Madison, WI 53705

I am writing in support of the proposed Curran Broadhead Expansion Grant. I am a Kindergarten teacher at Blair-Taylor Elementary School, and my husband and I own a dairy farm. We have two sons, Samuel is two years old and Noah is 3 months old. Our family would greatly benefit from having internet in multiple aspects of our lives.

Teaching in a rural district during the pandemic wasn't easy for me without having access to internet. I was expected to teach reading and math lessons virtually every single day for an hour and then be available via email throughout the rest of the day. Since we don't have internet at home, I was having to pack up my son and drive to Blair (20 minute drive) every day so I could use my parents internet. We do have internet on our phones but it isn't fast enough or reliable enough to count on to reach all of my students. Even before the pandemic, and as things get back to normal, not having internet at home causes stress because I can't work from home at all meaning I have to go into work on the weekends just so I can access the online materials and prep for the week. Being able to work on my computer in the evenings when my boys go to bed would save me from having to stay late at school or from having to go in on weekends. There are also multiple online teaching classes that are offered to me as a teacher but that I have to decline in participating throughout the year because it is just not convenient for me without having internet access at home.

On our farm, we have 50-70 cows milking at all times and 60-70 steers. We have 420 acres that we cash crop. We are currently trying to implement more precision farming through GPS planting, spraying and combining. To do this, it would be very helpful to have a reliable internet source to download the set mapping from our GPS to our computer. It would also be beneficial having internet for uploading documents for crop insurance purposes, and USDA mapping. We do all of our own tax planning and run into difficulties without having internet. With a new dairy facility hopefully coming by Summer of 2022, we would like to be able to implement cow activity monitors to help monitor general herd health in which some systems require internet system. We would also like to have Wi-Fi cameras to monitor our calving maternity ward.

As a family, having internet at home would be very beneficial as our kids grow up, for work and also for our day-to-day enjoyment. I finished my master's degree last year and that was very difficult for me as I had to drive to my parents' house in Blair to work on all of my assignments because it was all online. As our boys start school, they will need reliable internet for their homework assignments. Our family would like to be able to live stream school events such as sporting events, school board meetings and concerts from our house and we would also enjoy being able to download and stream entertainment.

If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to reach me at (608) 797-3880 or at olsona@btsd.k12.wi.us. Our family is highly in support of this Curran Broadhead Expansion Project. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully, Alexandra Olson Monday, March 7th, 2022

Steffany Powell Coker, Secretary to the Commission Public Service Commission 4822 Madison Yards Way North Tower, 6° floor Madison, WI 53705

Ms. Powell Coker,

I am writing in support of the proposed Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Grant. Modern life is dependent on fast, reliable, and affordable internet service. We have all experienced the frustration of losing internet connection when at work. This is the frustration that we live in every day in our own homes. As a teacher and resident of rural Jackson County, I expect digital equity with those living in larger communities.

Living in a rural area like we do, we enjoy being away from the busy atmosphere that an urban area presents. We also understand that there can be trade-offs to our decision to live here. Although, we do not appreciate being treated like second class citizens who have to beg to receive services that are handed out to most without even having to be asked for (high speed internet). We are parents, teachers, students, public servants, tradespeople, and the like. We should have access to reliable internet just the same as those who live in highly populated areas. Equal internet access provides equal opportunities.

Think about our kids. There is recent data to suggest that a lack of access to the internet negatively affects student achievement. This reason alone should be the only justification we need to move forward with this grant. Here is an excerpt from a study done through the *National Center for Education Statistics*: "The indicators in Section 3 show higher average achievement scores for students who used computers at home and/or had internet access at home than for those who did not (*Indicators 15–21*). However, these analyses do not systematically take into account multiple socioeconomic background characteristics that are known to affect student achievement." "8th graders who are without internet access are, on average, 27 months behind their peers" who do have access.

We are asking you to help restore our faith in our elected officials. Fund this project because it is the right and equitable thing to do.

I fully support the Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Project. If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to reach me at (715)533-3476 or mac_bowen@achm.k12.wi.us. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully, Mac & Ashley Bowen N9681 Tyler Road Hixton, WI 54635 Greg Geairng Richard & Beverly Gearing N8198 Forness Road Hixton, WI 54635

March 9, 2022

Steffany Powell Coker, Secretary to the Commission Public Service Commission 4822 Madison Yards Way North Tower, 6th floor Madison, WI 53705

Ms. Powell Coker,

We are writing in support of the proposed **Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Grant.** Modern life is dependent on fast, reliable, and affordable internet service. As a resident of rural Jackson County, I would hope to expect digital equity with those living in larger communities.

We own/operate a dairy farm business in the Township of Curran. Currently the only access to internet is on my cell phone and it is very difficult to as the cell coverage is not the best where we live. Having access to the internet would help us in a lot of ways including being able to use email, look up farm machinery manuals, look up prices of cattle, feed, and prices of crops. At this time we have to rely on calling relatives and having them look these things up. One area of concern is that there are many businesses that want us to pay bills on-line and we do not have that option. My bank even wants us to go paperless and do our banking on-line, even saying that they will charge for paper copies of statements to be mailed and we cannot sign up for that without having internet access.

My parents are having a lot of doctor appointments and they have the option of having video appointments, but they cannot use that option without internet. Even watching TV we are limited to stations we can watch as we only have an antenna. With high speed internet, we could stream TV shows to watch.

We have lived and farmed in the rural Hixton area all our life and being on a dead-end road, we do feel like we are at the end of the news chain at times. Without quality internet services, we are not keeping up with the world around us. If this proposal from Tri-County Communications is funded, better access will improve our life and well-being. Communicating online is crucial for our community and is becoming the way of life. Having the option to have high speed internet will help us to be "connected" to the world in many ways. Internet options for us are so very limited and very expensive at this time in the area, we welcome the idea of high speed internet availability to us.

I am highly in support of the **Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Project.** If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to reach me at 715-299-2077 or Greg. Gearing 2077@gmail.com.

Thanks for the effort you are doing to "connect" us to this option:

Respectfully,

Greg Gearing

&

Richard & Beverly Gearing

Theynos Hear of

Richard & Beverly Gearing

Steffany Powell Coker, Secretary to the Commission Public Service Commission 4822 Madison Yards Way North Tower, 6th floor Madison, WI 53705

I am writing in support of the expansion of broadband services in Curran Township which, in turn, will enhance economic, educational, cultural, and social opportunities for a majority of Curran Township residents in Jackson County, Wisconsin who have been chronically underserved for decades. Currently many Curran Township constituents have only two broadband options: satellite and landline phone services that each provide mediocre performance levels of approximately 2 Mb/s download and 1 Mb/s uploads stifling our ability to utilize educational and technological applications.

Using my wife and I as a case in point - we are presently forced to utilize the landline system platform which I've previously charitably characterized as "mediocre". Our needs for an upgraded fiber optic system with exponentially superior download/upload performance stems from the reality that I teach on-line courses for University of Wisconsin system campuses at Madison, River Falls, Superior, and Parkside. Additionally, my wife and I have been periodically tasked with providing pandemic-induced homeschooled on-line instructional delivery methods for our elementary aged grandchildren. When struggling with our technology issues, I cannot help but wonder if our grandchildren will be motivated to continue to live in this beautiful Driftless Region of Wisconsin if proper access to competitive levels of technology are denied. From a social perspective, we have adult children and grandchildren located on the U.S. west coast that we strive to stay in touch with via internet related services. We are representative of many citizens in Curran Township that have similar needs. There are numerous other technology upgrade demands I can cite, but will limit narrative to respect your time.

I encourage you to contact me directly if you prefer that I elaborate further on this important issue. I can be contacted at <u>dswenson118@gmail.com</u> or (715) 896-1606. Thank you in advance for your time and attention in leveling this technology playing field — we appreciate your vision for making this critical infrastructure investment for current and future generations.

Sincerely,

Dwight and Ruth Swenson Curran Township Residents N8644 South Adams Road Hixton, WI 54635

February 24, 2022

Steffany Powell Coker, Secretary to the Commission Public Service Commission 4822 Madison Yards Way North Tower, 6th floor Madison, WI 53705

Ms. Powell Coker,

I am writing in support of the proposed **Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Grant.** Modern life is dependent on fast, reliable, and affordable internet service. As a resident of rural Jackson County, I expect digital equity with those living in larger communities.

- Challenges...... I could have had many opportunities of working from home if I would have had
 reliable internet service. I've had problems communicating with family members via Skype and
 Facetime. We could have lowered our satellite service by using other options instead of Direct Tv
 or Dish.
- Without quality internet services, we are not keeping up with the world around us. If this proposal from Tri-County Communications is funded, better access will improve our life and well-being. Communicating online is crucial for our community.

I am highly in support of the Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Project. If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to reach me at 715-896-3112 or sgearing@yahoo.com. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Jeff and Sharl Gearing N8484 County Road G Hixton, WI 54635 Steffany Powell Coker, Secretary to the Commission Public Service Commission 4822 Madison Yards Way North Tower, 6th floor Madison, WI 53705

Ms. Powell Coker,

I am writing in support of the proposed **Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Grant.** Modern life is dependent on fast, reliable, and affordable internet service. As a resident of rural Jackson County, I expect digital equity with those living in larger communities.

- I currently own a home in Curran WI. Our ability to have broadband internet service is limited by our
 rural location. We currently use Viasat satellite internet which is both costly and limited as to speed,
 connectivity, and data cap. While Viasat does provide us with an internet connection, it is absolutely
 inadequate.
- My wife and I both run businesses out of our home and because of our limited access to broadband, we are unable to efficiently operate our businesses. This is a distinct competitive disadvantage for our success.

I am highly in support of the **Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Project.** If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to reach me at 612 590 2299 or myles4032@gmail.com.

Respectfully,

Myles Jacob 9109 Taft Rd. Hixton, WI 54635 March 6, 2022

Steffany Powell Coker, Secretary to the Commission Public Service Commission 4822 Madison Yards Way North Tower, 6th floor Madison, WI 53705

Ms. Powell Coker,

I am writing in support of the proposed **Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Grant.** Modern life is dependent on fast, reliable, and affordable internet service. As a resident of rural Jackson County, I expect digital equity with those living in larger communities. Currently, the only access to internet is using the hot spots on our cell phones. This past year has been very difficult with my high school student needing internet to access his schoolwork and meeting with his schoolteachers. (Thankfully, the school district was able to provide internet for him for a short time so that he would not fall behind in his education.) We do not have very good cell service and even when the school district provided a hotspot, it was not always reliable. My job required me to work from home this last year also and I too had difficulty meeting the requirements for my job also because of the inadequate internet service.

If this proposed high speed internet from Tri-County Communications is funded, better access will improve our life and opportunities for many things that have never been an option for us. We have never had the option of downloading entertainment or tried to Facetime from home. These are things that we would like to have an option to do.

I am highly in support of the **Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Project.** If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to reach me at 715-797-2068 or Olsonkelly@westerntc.edu. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Kelly Olson

Kelly Olson N8379 Curran Rd Hixton, WI 54635 Steffany Powell Coker, Secretary to the Commission Public Service Commission 4822 Madison Yards Way North Tower 6th Floor Madison, WI 53705

Ms. Powell Coker,

I am writing in support of the proposed **Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Grant**. Modern life is Dependent on fast, reliable, and affordable internet service. As a resident of rural Jackson County, I expect digital equity with those living in larger communities.

Without quality internet services, we are not keeping up with the world around us. If this proposal from Tri-County Communications is funded, better access will improve our life and well being. Communicating online is crucial for our community.

Every household and student should have the availability of broadband should there be a need for remote learning in the future.

I am highly in support of the Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Project. If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to reach me at a 715-797-1716 or steiyork@hotmail.com. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Brian and Tamara Steig W15891 State Highway 121 Hixton, WI 54635 Steffany Powell Coker, Secretary to the Commission Public Service Commission 4822 Madison Yards Way North Tower, 6th floor Madison, WI 53705

Ms. Powell Coker,

We are in support of the proposed **Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Grant**. Modern life is dependent on fast, reliable and affordable internet service. As lifelong residents of rural Jackson County, we expect digital equity as with those living in larger communities.

The pandemic has further increased the need to be able to work and attend school from home. It is essential to have internet services that can support this expectation.

If we don't have quality internet services, we are not keeping up with the ever-changing world around us. If this proposal from Tri-County Communications is funded, better access will improve our life and well-being. Communicating online is a crucial aspect for our rural community.

Again, we can't stress enough the importance of this project and feel it is essential for the health and wellness of our community. If you have any questions or would like additional information we would be happy to discuss further.

Sincerely

Todd and Melissa Erickson

N11583 Section One Road

Hixton, WI 54635

715-797-1622; 715-896-1542

msbergie74@gmail.com

SANDRA HUFF N10525 SECTION ONE RD HIXTON WI 54635 715-797-1764 huffluck@gmail.com

March 14, 2022

Steffany Powell Coker, Secretary of the Commission Pubic Service Commission 4822 Madison Yards Way North Tower, 6th Floor Madison, WI 53705

Subject: Letter of Support for the Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Grant

Ms. Powell Coker:

I am writing in support of the proposed **Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Grant**. Modern life is dependent on fast, reliable, and affordable internet service. As a resident of the rural Town of Northfield in Jackson County, I expect digital equity with those living in larger communities.

Without quality internet services, we are not keeping up with the world around us. If this proposal from Tri-County Communications is funded, better access will improve our life and well-being. Communicating online is crucial for our community.

I am highly in support of the **Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Project.** If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to reach me by phone at 715-797-1764 or email at huffuck@gmail.com.

Respectfully,

Sandra Huff

Town of Northfield

Steffany Powell Coker, Secretary of the Commission Public Service Commission 4822 Madison Yards Way North Tower, 6th Floor Madison, WI 53705

Ms. Powell Coker

I am writing in support of the purposed Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Grant. Modern life is dependent on fast, reliable, and affordable internet service. As a resident of rural Jackson County, I expect digital equity with those that live in larger communities. I believe everyone should have this access.

Without quality internet services, we are not keeping up with the world around us. If this proposal from Tri-County Communications is funded, better access will improve our life and well being. With the things that are happening in our lives now it would give children better access to online learning and access for those who have to work from home. Communicating online is crucial for our community.

I am in support of the Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Project. My email address is sks012955@hotmail.com if you would have any further questions for me.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sharon K. Deverson

Respectfully,

Sharon K. Severson, Clerk Town of Northfield

Steffany Powell Coker, Secretary of the Commission Public Service Commission 4822 Madison Yards Way North Tower, 6th Floor Madison, WI 53705

Ms. Powell Coker

I am writing in support of the purposed Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Grant. Modern life is dependent on fast, reliable, and affordable internet service. As a resident of rural Jackson County, I expect digital equity with those that live in larger communities. I believe everyone should have this access.

Without quality internet services, we are not keeping up with the world around us. If this proposal from Tri-County Communications is funded, better access will improve our life and well being. With the things that are happening in our lives now it would give children better access to online learning and access for those who have to work from home. Communicating online is crucial for our community.

I am in support of the Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Project. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Kevin R Severson



March 12th, 2022

Steffany Powell Coker, Secretary to the Commission North Tower, 6th Floor 4822 Madison Yards Way Madison, WI 53705

Subject: Letter of Support for the Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Grant.

Ms. Powell Coker,

On behalf of the Town of Garden Valley, I am writing in support of the proposed **Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Grant** in collaboration with Tri-County Communications.

Garden Valley Township has six homes neighboring Northfield on Burton Road who can be served at nominal cost if grant is funded. We would be willing to commit to a cash match of \$3,000.00 if this project is funded. It would be funded out of Town ARPA Funds.

Without quality internet services, we are not keeping up with the world around us. Please give your full consideration to this important project being proposed for our area of Jackson County.

If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to reach me at 715-984-2211. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Vince Ruzic, Chairman Town of Garden Valley

mee Ruzic

Steffarg Powell Coker, Sec. of the Commission Public Service Commission 4822 MAdison YARds WAY North TOWER, 6th Floor MA dison, W. 53705

Ms. Powell Coller

I Am writing in support of the proposed CURRAN Nonthfield BROADBAND ExpANSION GRANT.

I believe everyone should have this Access.

I believe everyone should have this Access. I do Not have any buildings in Northfield, but own A RACE TRACK for dirt bikes in I Am highly in support of this grant and commit to a cash match of #200." if this project is funded.

Kespectfully,

Chris HALVORSON 905 N. 5th St. Manchester, Iowa 52057 1-608-220-6853



March 2, 2022

Steffany Powell Coker, Secretary to the Commission North Tower, 6th Floor 4822 Madison Yards Way Madison, WI 53705

Ms. Powell Coker,

I am writing in support of the proposed Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Grant. Business success and growth is dependent on reliable, and affordable internet service, as it allows us to complete nearly all aspects of operations.

Allied Cooperative is a \$200 million cooperative serving customers throughout west central Wisconsin, including those in the town of Curran/Jackson County region. Our customers range from agricultural and businesses to local homeowners. We have locations in 12 Wisconsin communities including Blair and Galesville which service this area of Wisconsin. At peak season we employ about 375 people.

Like most businesses today we rely on the internet for our sales and marketing efforts as well as the ability to communicate with customers. The adoption of advanced precision agriculture technology and farm information management systems has become a critical part of our customers' business. In order to increase yields and compete in today's increasingly competitive marketplace the need for reliable, high-speed internet is critical.

Allied shares important data and information with our customers and upload important information from their farm fields etc. In addition, customers are able to manage their purchases and place orders through our online systems.

One of the things our cooperative relies heavily on is the transmission of important yield data and maps via the internet to our customers and our employees in the field. When poor internet service keeps us from getting data through quickly it prohibits our work and causes slowdowns in the field – costing us time and money.

For these reasons, it is critical that our area of Jackson County upgrades to true broadband service. If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to reach me at (608) 548-5460 or at kbernacchi@allied.coop. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Humen (

Karmen Bernacchi

Director of Marketing Communications

MARCH 11, 2022

SUPERIOR FRESH

Superior Fresh, LLC (715) 984-2598 info@superiorfresh.com W15506 Superior Fresh Drive, Hixton, Wisconsin 54635 www.superiorfresh.com



Steffany Powerll Coker, Secretary to the Commission North Tower, 6th Floor 4822 Madison Yards Way Madison, WI 53705

Ms. Powell Coker.

I am writing in support of the proposed Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Grant. Business success and growth is dependent on reliable, and affordable internet service, as it allows us to complete nearly all aspects of operations.

Superior Fresh is the world's largest aquaponic farm, growing USDA certified organic produce and raising Atlantic salmon. We grow safe, nutritious food for the future of a healthier global community, while also regenerating our surrounding land to its native state. We do this as our commitment to the planet and future generations Our ecosystem provides year-round availability, and our team delivers unmatched commitment to customer service. We ensure fresh, organic food is always available to local communities. Superior Fresh employs over 100 community members from our surrounding areas.

Superior Fresh has invested in state-of-the-art technology and continous monitoring of our farm, which is heavily dependent on the use of broadband internet. Without reliable internet service, we would be operating our farm blindly. Additionally, operating our business during the COVID-19 pandemic forced many of our support staff to work from home and further accellerated the need for reliable internet service across our surrounding townships. Furthermore, our executive staff uses VPN access to monitor the farm remotely and respond to any critical level alarms, once again proving the importance that reliable home internet poses.

For these reasons, it is critical that our area of Jackson County upgrades to true broadband service. If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to reach me at 715.984.2598 or at . Thank you for your consideration.

Kindest Regards,

Brandon Gonsacker

President



3/8/2022 Steffany Powell Coker, Secretary to the Commission Public Service Commission 4822 Madison Yards Way North Tower, 6th floor Madison, WI 53705

Ms. Powell Coker,

My name is Steve Johnson and I work and live here in Curran Township. I am writing in support of the Curran/Northfield Broadband Project in partnership with TCC. We started building a house here in 2013. We found out then that there was no internet service to the property. That hasn't changed.

Currently we use our hotspots on our phones (Verizon) for our internet service. We tried a satellite service but that was very poor service for over \$100/ month. It makes it difficult to do much work from home as a realtor.

I work for Coldwell Banker out of the Black River Falls office. I can tell you that even before the COVID issue in 2020, there were buyers that would not buy a house (or even request a showing) if the property did not have internet where one could work remotely from home. As you can imagine, that has gotten worse as now more people are working remotely, requiring quality internet. This shows that quality internet also affects home values and the ability to sell your home. I have read that a home with good internet, increases the value of the home by up to \$10,000. Again I am currently working with a couple that will not even look at a home unless it has high-speed internet as the wife works from home.

We are "empty nesters" so we have no children living at home so I cannot speak to it, but I'm assuming it would have been very difficult with 2-3 kids trying to learn remotely with the internet access we have.



Steve Johnson, Realtor
Coldwell Banker River Valley, REALTORS
304 Main Street | Black River Falls, WI 54615
Office 715.284.9055 | Cell 715-829-0404
sjohnson@cbrivervalley.com | www.sjohnson.cbrivervalley.com



Main Office • 2327 W Veterans Pkwy • PO Box 988 • Marshfield, WI 54449-0988 Regional Office • 70 South State St • Hixton, WI 54635

800-236-1041 · FAX 715-687-4126

March 7, 2022

Steffany Powell Coker, Secretary to the Commission North Tower, 6th Floor 4822 Madison Yards Way Madison, WI 53705

Ms. Powell Coker,

I am writing in support of the proposed Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Grant.

ProVision Partners Cooperative of Wisconsin is an ag supply cooperative of feed/grain, agronomy, and energy products. We employee around 350 people. A good deal of our employees and patrons live and do business in rural areas of Wisconsin where local internet is a challenge.

Having fast, reliable, and affordable internet service in rural areas of Jackson County is directly related to business vitality.

As a company we have been fortunate to have access for most of our locations. However, we are limited on using necessary technology in the field with poor rural broadband. In addition, with the pandemic forcing some of our employees to be able to work remotely has been a challenge with extremely slow down and upload speeds. Virtual meetings and training are difficult and often not even possible. Our farmers that we serve also are facing these challenges with internet speeds which limits them from using a lot of todays technologies to advance their operations.

As our business who looks to recruit new employees to service rural areas, residential broadband service is an essential quality of life issue for retention and relocation. Without this vital piece of infrastructure, we will lose qualified young employees to other regions or other states.

If this project can bring better rural broadband to under served areas we will be able to offer more flexible working arrangements, offer new technologies to our agriculture customers, and our employees can us vital technology to better and more efficiently do their jobs.

If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to reach me at 800-236-1041 or at rlarson@provisionpartners.coop. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Rob Larson

General Manger/CEO



Date: February 3, 2022

Steffany Powell Coker, Secretary to the Commission North Tower, 6th Floor 4822 Madison Yards Way Madison, WI 53705

Ms. Powell Coker,

I am writing in support of the proposed Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Grant.

Oakwood Bank is privately owned full-service bank founded in 1920 that serves the greater area. We have 4 full service locations in West Central Wisconsin and South Eastern Minnesota.

Having fast, reliable, and affordable internet service in rural areas of Jackson County is directly related to business vitality.

The pandemic shed a light on the importance of high speed rural broadband service. Currently, in areas with poor internet service, working from home is difficult to do. Employees and students are not able to effectively communicate with one another via web conferences or emails, and they are not able to easily access information necessary to complete their work. This project will change that.

As a professional business located in a small rural community we realize the importance of families having access to high speed internet. As we continue to recruit new employees, residential broadband service is an essential quality of life issue for relocation. Without this vital piece of infrastructure, we will lose qualified young employees to other regions or other states.

Having the ability for families to work from home has become an essential requirement in many cases for families to enjoy rural life. These types of projects will help ensure we have qualified employees as well as improve the quality of life for many people. If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to reach me at [715-983-2295] or at [billid@oakwoodbank.net]. Thank you for your consideration.

William J DeBruyckere

President/CEO

Respectfull

Oakwood Bank



New Hope Community Litheran Church

March 3, 2022

W16346 Dettinger Road, Hixton, WI 54635 (2 miles west of Northfield on Hwy 121) 715-984-2571

Steffany Powell Coker Secretary to the Commission North Tower, 6th Floor 4822 Madison Yards Way Madison, WI 53705

Dear Ms. Powell Coker,

I am pleased to be able to write you today to express my support for the proposed expansion of broadband internet service in the Towns of Curran and Northfield.

Although I represent the New Hope Community Lutheran Church which is located just west of the village of Northfield, I do have reason to believe this expansion of broadband service is not only essential to residents and existing businesses, but also would be an attraction for other businesses considering locating in this area. In the future, fast, reliable internet service will be required for many essential public services.

While our church does have very good access to high speed internet service, the Covid pandemic presented new opportunities for expanded broadband service in these two Townships.

When our church was shut down because of Covid, we were concerned about being able to provide our members with essential church related needs. Like other churches around the country, we made an effort to live stream our Sunday services to the public. We experienced some difficulty doing this because of inadequate internet speeds.

Of even greater concern was the fact that many of our church members either did not have internet service at all, or the service they did have did not meet the speed requirements necessary to stream our Sunday services.

While we certainly hope we will never again feel the impacts of another pandemic, it would be nice if everyone had the capability to participate in worship from their homes if needed.

I am also aware that some families needed to have expensive satellite services installed at their homes to accommodate their children's need to do their schoolwork. The companies that provide these satellite services also limit the amount of data available each billing cycle.

For these reasons, I believe it is of utmost importance that the Towns of Curran and Northfield, located in Jackson County, be granted the financial resources necessary to meet their broadband requirements.

Respectfully,

Dale Klevgard Pastor, New Hope Community Lutheran Church





Hixton Fire & Rescue

140 Interstate Dr, Hixton, WI 54635



March 2, 2022

Chief Thomas Davidson
Hixton Volunteer Fire Department
140 Interstate Drive
Hixton, WI 54635

Subject: Letter of Support for the Curran Broadband Project

Ms. Lippert,

I am writing in support of the proposed Curran Broadband Project. Navigating the ever changing and advancing world has become highly dependent on fast, reliable, and affordable internet service. As residents of rural Jackson County, we expect technological equity with those living in larger communities.

The Hixton Volunteer Fire Department (HVFD) is a 100% volunteer, non-profit organization, consisting of 27 dedicated volunteers from the local community. HVFD's coverage area is 68 square miles, and includes 16 miles of Interstate 94, and sections of State Highway 95, and the CN Railroad. This area of coverage includes the Village of Hixton, Township of Hixton, Township of Curran, Township of Northfield, and Township of Garden Valley. The services our organization provides for this coverage area include, but are not limited to fire protection, extrication, emergency management, public education, and mutual aid to surrounding emergency service groups.

Emergency Services are becoming more and more dependent on digital technology and services for communication, navigation, pre-planning, incident reporting, education, and training. This project will assist our organization immensely in assuring we are able to meet our obligations as related to these critical components.

HVFD fully supports the Curran Broadband Project. If you have any questions, or would like additional information, please feel free to reach out to us at (715) 896-5953 or hittonfd@gmail.com. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Chief Thomas Davidson

Thomas M. Davidson



TAYLOR FIRE & RESCUE

P.O. Box 171, Taylor, WI 54659 Serving: Village of Taylor, Town of Springfield, Curran & Franklin

3.9.2022

Steffany Powell Coker, Secretary to the Commission North Tower, 6th Floor 4822 Madison Yards Way Madison, WI 53705

Ms. Powell Coker,

The Taylor Fire and Rescue is writing to offer our support for the proposed Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Grant. Not only is the success and growth of rural businesses dependent on reliable, and affordable internet service; but it also has a safety and quality of life aspect as well for rural residents.

The Taylor Fire & Rescue is a volunteer fire and rescue department that covers all or part of the towns of Curran, Franklin, Springfield, and the Village of Taylor in rural western Jackson County, Wisconsin. The vast majority of our membership are those who live in the rural towns and who lack high quality, reliable and affordable internet service.

Access to high quality and reliable internet is imperative for two main reasons. For safety for our community and overall quality of life.

Safety & Quality of Life

- EMS members are required to do online training through the State of Wisconsin to keep up with their re-certification. Members who don't have internet access or do not have access to high quality internet have had to bring their devices to the fire station to complete the trainings.
- Members not only have issues with access to internet, but also to cell phone coverage. Being able to
 have members that have access to high quality, reliable internet will allow our members to connect their
 cell phones to Wi-Fi and therefore be able to receive lamResponding notifications for fire and rescue
 calls when cell phone reception is lacking or not available.
- Allows for members to have access to instant communication and the ability to stay updated on local weather forecast and changing weather updates.
- A top question that is asked, and that's often a deciding factor for most people when choosing to buy a house in rural areas, is whether or not it has access to high quality, reliable and affordable internet.
- Our membership is aging, and we need to do everything possible to give those who are wanting to live
 in sparce rural areas the same digital amenities that come with having access to high quality internet in
 the urban areas. The younger generation living in rural areas

For the reasons above, and so much more, it is critical that our area of Jackson County upgrades to true broadband service. If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to reach to us at 715-896-5354 (Tim Rose) / 715-896-1072 (Steve Boe) or at timrose04@yahoo.com / steve.r.boe@gmail.com. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Tim Rose Fire Chief

Taylor Fire & Rescue

Steve Boe

Co-EMS Service Director

Taylor Fire & Rescue



March 12, 2022

Eau Claire Campuses

Clairemont West Gateway

620 W. Clairemont Ave. Eau Claire, WI 54701-6162 715-833-6200 Fax 715-833-6470 www.cvtc.edu

Steffany Powell Coker, Secretary to the Commission Public Service Commission 4822 Madison Yards Way North Tower, 6th floor Madison, WI 53705

Dear Steffany Powell Coker:

The Chippewa Valley Technical College (CVTC) is in support of the Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Project grant application through the Wisconsin Broadband Expansion Grant program. This grant application supports the Chippewa Valley Technical College's mission:

CVTC delivers innovative and applied education that supports the workforce needs of the region, improves the lives of students, and adds value to our communities.

Faster and more reliable broadband for CVTC District residents will provide more opportunities for CVTC stakeholders to enroll in the desired educational opportunities available from CVTC. These opportunities include the CVTC Learning Management Systems, On-line courses, Hybrid courses, My Choice Courses, Business and Industry training and course work for High School students. In order for CVTC to be able to deliver programing to district residents, fast and reliable broadband is necessary.

CVTC supports the Wisconsin Broadband Expansion Grant program which in turn will provide opportunities for residents and businesses within the CVTC District. CVTC supports this grant application and hopes that the grant request that is being brought forward by Jackson County and Bug Tussel Wireless is approved.

If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to Thomas Lange, Vice President of Information Technology and Chief Information Officer of CVTC at 715-831-7285.

Sincerely,

Thomas Lange

Vice President of Information Technology and Chief Information Officer

Chippewa Valley Technical College

Tlange8@cvtc.edu

Thomas J. Jange

715-831-7285



JEFF SMITH WISCONSIN STATE SENATOR – 31ST DISTRICT



February 17, 2022

Steffany Powell Coker, Secretary to the Commission North Tower, 6th Floor 4822 Madison Yards Way Madison, WI 53705

Dear Review Panel Members,

As you consider applications for the 2022 grant cycle of the Broadband Expansion Grant Program, I urge you to support Tri-County Communications in their efforts to receive broadband expansion grant funding. Tri-County Communications has a great reputation for expanding broadband to underserved and unserved areas and they will continue to do so with their new project in Jackson County. This project will have a positive impact on students, residents, and the economies of the two towns as a whole.

Tri-County Communications has a passion for bringing broadband to unserved and underserved areas in rural Wisconsin. They recognize these areas are in need of assistance and are developing a strong track record of providing it, both through working hard to expand broadband access and through tirelessly serving those already in their service area. I have been glad to support them in previous grant applications and am pleased to do so once again.

The Town of Northfield is home to almost 700 residents and the Town of Curran is home to almost 400 residents. Jackson County is woefully behind other counties in Wisconsin for broadband expansion efforts. According to Forward Analytics, Jackson County ranked 71 out of 72 counties for broadband access. Additionally, the need for broadband was heightened after the COVID-19 pandemic forced our communities to operate remotely.

Tri-County Communications aims to bury roughly 6 miles of fiber within the Town of Northfield and 41 miles of fiber within the Town of Curran. Jackson County is a beautiful and valued part of the state. The approval of this grant application will improve the quality of life for residents. Broadband is sorely needed in the rural areas of our great state, and the Towns of Northfield and Curran are no exception.

I am proud to represent Wisconsin's 31st Senate District, and I am committed to the betterment of Wisconsin as a whole. I recommend the approval of this grant application, as I believe the Towns of Northfield and Curran are great places to live and raise families. Tri-County Communications has a strong dedication to helping these areas receive the broadband services they need and they deserve support from our Broadband Expansion Grant Program.

Sincerely,

JEFF SMITH
State Senator

31st Senate District

of Smith



Treig E. Pronschinske

STATE REPRESENTATIVE 92nd ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

March 3rd, 2022

Steffany Powell Coker, Secretary to the Commission North Tower, 6th Floor 4822 Madison Yards Way Madison, WI 53705

RE: Jackson County Broadband Grants

Commission Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to write in support of Jackson County receiving a PSC Broadband Grant.

The Towns of Curran and Northfield are home to many folks who desperately need internet to attend doctor appointments, virtual schools, keep in touch with their friends and family, grow their businesses and many more vital functions. This grant would fundamentally improve the living conditions of those in my district and can positively impact the next generation.

As a state that has many underserved areas when it comes to internet access, it is especially true in my district and is a deep felt issue to me personally.

Lastly, the community is home to a large population of residents who have lacked adequate internet access for years and this project would positively impact every aspect of their lives.

If I can provide any further testimony of my support, please do not hesitate to contact me at 608-266-7015 or Rep.Pronschinske@legis.wi.gov.

Sincerely,

Treig E. Pronschinske State Representative

J. E. Donahinaha

92 Assembly District

12/20/21

Boe's Double A Custom Covers

Aaron and Alisa Boe & Family

W15131 Taylor Rd.

Taylor, WI 54659

Aaboe69@gmail.com

To County and Township Board members,

Currently my family and I live at W15131 Taylor Rd. In the Township of Springfield which is part of Jackson County. Our road is right on the Springfield and Curran Township line. We have concerns with our availability of reliable high speed internet services not currently provided in our area. With a home upholstery business, wife's working from home remotely, and daughter's online college courses due to Covid-19 protocols, we find it difficult to stay connected. We have tried DSL and satellite internet, but it is way to slow for today environment and expectation. Many of the sites and programs needed for work and classes will not load or just shut down due to timing out from lag time of upload and download speeds.

My upholstery business uses the internet to order parts, stream meetings with clients/suppliers, and review assembly videos to keep up on new processes and techniques. Currently trying to use just my cell phone to do business and am find this to be challenging and difficult at the same time.

My wife must log into her work, run live programs from the company's secure VPN, and have meetings throughout the day. This can not be done at our current residence. She packs her computer up and goes into Taylor to be able to do her job from a relative's home.

My daughter must do the same as my wife, drive into town to get internet fast enough to stream her classes and do her homework. This causes issues with trying to maintain grades and keep up with teacher expectations.

In all this is a major strain daily and we would like it fixed. The people in Taylor, Hixton, Alma Center, Melrose, Black River Falls, etc., have access to faster and more reliable serves than we do in the rural areas. It also usually costs us more to get the same serves if and when it might come available. I spend a lot of money for faster and unlimited internet on my cell phone to help in trying to keep up with our needs as a working family, but this is not always the answer when you have multiple people and devices trying to feed off one mobile phone hot spot. This is no longer a luxury by today's standards and expectations!

I am sure I am missing many other reasons but have highlighted some of the most crucial for our family and probably many others in our area.

If our leaders could address these issues in a timely matter will help our business, off site work efficiency and the education of our youth.

Concerned Citizen and Taxpayer,

Aaron R. Boe

Survey

TOWN OF CURRAN BROADBAND PROJECT SURVEY RESULTS

Summary **2/7/22**

	project area only (65 received)
1	"No" 14, Sattelite 10, cell phone 16, century link 15, 5 not answered
2	138 internet users represented in these numbers
3a	k-12 aged kids, 9 yes (8 BRF, 1 B-T)
3b	secondary-ed, 8 yes
3с	difficulty connecting for virtual ed, 13 yes
4a	business currently supported out of residence, 21 yes
4b	would you be likely to utilize TCC for future business needs? 25 yes
5	absent land owner, would you spend more time in Curran if access to broadband? 7
	yes (12 vacant landowners returned surveys) (8 BRFSD, 4 BTSD)
6	Would you use tele-health services? 37 yes
7	Do you know your internet speed? 17 answered yes with numbers, mostly cell phone
	hot spot users were highest (32/3) while century link DSL lowest (10/1.5)
8	Would you be willing to pay \$55/mo for 100/25 TCC service? 53 yes (82% take rate)
	W 11 TCC 1 2 22
9a	Would you consider TCC phone? 23 yes
9b	Would you consider TCC cable TV? 40 yes
10	Would you be willing to pledge \$50 or more? 36 yes (\$1,800 minimum)
11	Would you be willing to submit a letter of support? 39 yes
12	Would you support the town board's decision to use township money toward project?
	58 yes (89% Yes)
	outside project area (18 received)
1	Do you currently have internet access? 7 yes (TCC), 2 yes (service provider not
	identified), 7 no internet used
10	Would you be willing to pledge \$50 or more? 2 yes
11	Would you be willing to submit letter of support? 4 yes
12	Would you support the town board's decision to use towhship money toward project? 9

Summary March 7, 2022

83 total surveys; 67 (81%) say "yes" to town spending money

42 answered "yes" to submitting a letter of support

38 answered "yes" to pledge \$50 or more

School

BT

BRF 40 surveys, 80 ppl, 33 "yes" town spend money, 22 "yes" personal pledge \$50

8 "yes" 4k-12 in house, 5 "yes" secondary-ed, 10 "yes" experienced difficulty

32 surveys, 57 ppl, 24 "yes town spend mondy, 13 "yes" personal pledge \$50

2 "yes" 4k-12 in house, 2 "yes" secondary-ed, 2 "yes" experienced difficulty

March 2, 2022

Steffany Powell Coker, Secretary to the Commission North Tower, 6th Floor 4822 Madison Yards Way Madison, WI 53705

Ms. Powell Coker,

I am writing in support of the proposed Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Grant.

I am a crop farmer who lives in the Town of Curran. I plant and sell crops on my farm. I also rent my barn out to a young farmer who is using it for his dairy barn to milk his cows.

Having fast, reliable, and affordable internet service in rural areas of Jackson County is directly related to the success of the agriculture economy.

Ag business is constantly changing and I need to be on the internet to track crop prices in our area and the stock market, I use it for tracking down new equipment to use on my farm, and to keep in contact with our local — Allied, agribusiness agent to help with putting in the crops. Certain tractors also use the internet to help with putting in the crops and also with spraying the crops, too. Therefore, internet use is becoming more and more useful in our business. I need to keep up with the times and internet services should as well.

My broadband internet service is currently lower than I would like it to be. I have a family of 5 with my wife being a teacher, 2 daughters are in college and I have one married out of the house. When my 2 daughters, who are in college, are home we are limited on internet use since they need to check in with professors for online classes too. But I do have to use the internet and I cannot since we have to share the internet use between 4 people. My current broadband use is at a 2.73 Mb/s download and .73 Mb/s upload with CenturyLink service. It seems to be not working in certain areas when I am away from the house as well, in the fields. I know in rural areas everyone is trying to update our internet services including our cell phone service too. I hope this grant would provide help for when I am at my home with good WI-FI use too.

If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to reach me at 715-896-3694 or email me at nehringkym@gmail.com. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Vaughn Nehring Nehringland Farms--Kimberly R. Nehring 4K teacher N31024 Elland Rd. Blair,WI 54616 nehrik@btsd.k12.wi.us March 2, 2022

Steffany Powell Coker, Secretary to the Commission North Tower, 6th Floor 4822 Madison Yards Way Madison, WI 53705

Ms. Powell Coker;

I am writing in support of the proposed Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Grant.

I am a teacher in the Blair Taylor school district. I teach 4 -year -old students in our district. Our school has 597 students in our rural district in which 90% are white and 5.7% are Hispanic and 46.1% are economically disadvantaged. Our district stretches from the Trempealeau county lines all the way to the Jackson county lines which includes students in the town of Curran in Hixton and Taylor areas.

As our district moved to virtual learning, I could not successfully teach and connect with my students due to the lack of families that have access to internet services. Our school did provide hotspots for students who did not have internet services, but it was a limited amount that they could hand out. Also, I was told that hotspots were to be handed out to our high school students first and my 4K students were last on the list to get services. Therefore, it was difficult for me to connect to any of my students during the Covid lockdown time in 2020. The parents that I could reach were the ones that had their own services on a cell phone so we did zoom classes on cell phones. I also had to reach out with the mail service by providing worksheets or activities. I also made phone calls to keep in touch. As you might know, 4 -year- old's learn best from hands-on activities and social interactions, so not having a good internet connection meant that I could not provide the social (visual) access or in person learning through the internet for my students.

At my house, in the town of Curran, my internet service was not very good at the time. I have two daughters who are taking college classes and I was trying to teach online to my students. My speed test is telling me that I have a 2.73 MB/s download and upload of .73 Mb/s which makes our ability to use our internet impossible for us to be online all together. We needed to take turns and use the internet at certain times of the day to check in and do our work.

I believe our school district is willing to help with making sure that all of our students have access to good internet services for our online learning experiences. I sure hope that we will be getting grants, like this one, to help make this happen for our students. Thank you!

If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to reach me at 715-797-3019 or at nehringkym@gmail.com. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Kimberly R. Nehring 4K teacher N31024 Elland Rd. Blair,WI 54616 nehrik@btsd.k12.wi.us

Ms. Powell Coker,

I am writing in support of the proposed Curran/Northfield Broadband Expansion Grant. Modern (ite is dependent on fast, reliable and affordable internet service. As a resident of rural Jaukson County, I expect digital Equity with those living in larger communities. Without quality internet services, we are not Reeping up with the world around us. If this proposal from Tri-County Communications is funded, better access will improve our life and well being Communicating online is crucial for our community. I am highly in support of the Currant Northfield Broad band Expansion Project thank you for your consideration. Respectfully, Ronald ynul N10959 Cty Rd FF Hixton, Wi 54635

Ms. Cokur, I am writing in support of the proposed Centery North Feild Broadbond Expension Grant. Modern life is dependent on fast, reliable and Offordable internet Service. As, a resident of rural Tackson County, I cepect digital county with Shope living in larger Communities. other possible phrases to Consider including. Without quality internet services, we are not Keeping up with the would around us alt This proposal from tri-county Communications to funded, better access will improve our life and well-being. Communicating orline is Crucial for our Commundy. Curron/ North field Ian Singly en Support of Curron/ Graad band Expansion project. If you have any questions or would like additional infromati Pleaser Feel Free To Contact me. Respectally, arold Lee 253-297-0764